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A Contribution to the History of the Educational Tradition  
inherited from Madame de Maintenon.

(Abstract of a thesis presented for the degree of Ph.D. by  
Mary Sybil Smith, M.A. Cantab., Student of Bedford College.)

The first half of this thesis is concerned with Saint-Cyr itself, its founder, its history, its main ideas. A chapter is devoted to Madame de Maintenon, and lays especial emphasis on those sides of her character which were reflected in the school she founded. Another chapter sketches the history of the school, and describes the educational system finally established there. There follows a discussion of some of the distinctive features of the system - its aristocratic character, the advance it marked towards the secularisation of education, and its fore-shadowing of modern theories.

The second part deals with the Saint-Cyr tradition, and shows how Madame de Maintenon's foundation was copied by other schools. First are examined those of Gomerfontaine and Biszy and the "Institut de l'Enfant Jésus," founded by Languet de Gergy. All those were strongly marked by Saint-Cyr influence. The schools of the Ursulines and the Visitandines are considered next, but the conclusion reached is that, with certain exceptions, their debt to Saint-Cyr is small. A Section follows on various small schools at Poitiers, Arles, Luçon, Honfleur and Orléans, and on the important Houses of Education of the Legion of Honour. An example is then given of Saint-Cyr influence abroad, in the Institutes founded by Catherine of Russia. Under the heading of "Theorists," mention is made of the schemes of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre and of Madame de Genlis, who both held up Saint-Cyr as a pattern to be copied by other schools for girls. The conclusion reached is that the Saint-Cyr tradition is greater than is generally acknowledged, but that

Madame de Maintenon influenced girls' education more by her writings than by the Schools which she inspired.

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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE EDUCATIONAL  
TRADITION INHERITED FROM MADAME DE MAINTENON.

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[Thesis presented for the degree of Ph.D. by Mary Sybil Smith,  
M.A. (Cantab.), Student of Bedford College.]

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Un projet pour perfectionner l'éducation .. des Princes...

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## INTRODUCTION.

Saint-Cyr, Madame de Maintenon's great foundation, is still standing for all to see. At first sight, however, it appears to be so changed that even the founder herself would hardly recognize it, if she could come back to it to-day. Many years have passed since those for whom it was planned were driven from it. There are no more daughters of the nobility being educated there now by the Ladies of Saint-Louis, and basking in the favour of court and king. Their place has been taken by the officers and cadets of a famous military academy set up by a democratic government. Yet something of the original foundation still remains as, for example, in the buildings. The girls' classrooms and dormitories and other parts of the house, are said to be, and certainly appear to be, unchanged. From a consideration of these survivals, one is led on to ask whether the spirit of Saint-Cyr, and the educational ideas which it embodied have not survived also. Were they confined to the one foundation and swept away with it, or did they spread beyond it and influence other schools, and can traces of them be found even at the present day?

In the following pages an attempt will be made to answer

this question. The starting-point of our enquiry must be Madame de Maintenon herself, for much light is thrown upon certain characteristics of Saint-Cyr by an acquaintance with its founder. Next will follow a sketch of the history of the school and a discussion of the main features of the educational system established there. The whole of the second half of the book will be devoted to an examination of how this system spread and was imitated and left its mark upon the education of girls.

\* \* \*

I. MADAME DE MAINTENON, FOUNDER OF SAINT-CYR.

SYNOPSIS.

1. Introduction - Something must be said of the founder of Saint-Cyr, but the graver historical questions will not be discussed. p. 4
2. Early life - parents, childhood, education. p. 5
3. Marriage with Scarron. p.10
4. Life after the death of Scarron - friends. p.13
5. Governess to the King's children - quarrels with M<sup>me</sup> de Montespan - buys Maintenon - appointed lady-in-waiting to the Dauphine. p.14
6. Marriage with Louis XIV - how it came about - why she consented. p.13
7. Life at court until the death of the King. p.21
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9. M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon - appearance - character - good and bad qualities. p.25

# I. MADAME DE MAINTENON, FOUNDER OF SAINT-CYR.

## 1. Introduction.

The life of Madame de Maintenon has been called an enigma.<sup>1)</sup> The problems it raises allow of such different solutions that it is possible for some to consider her a monster of wickedness, while others hold her in the greatest respect and veneration. It is hard to believe that the Madame de Maintenon of whom Madame, Elizabeth-Charlotte of Bavaria, writes with such venom is the same as the "directrice" who figures in the Memoirs of the Ladies of Saint-Louis. Many books have been written about her amazing career, and there are various aspects of it which require, if not apology, yet certainly explanation. Madame de Maintenon has suffered at the hands of historians, especially of Saint-Simon. Modern opinion is ready to recognise that she has been misrepresented and to pass a more favourable judgment upon her. Such questions, however, as her part in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, or the extent of her political influence, do not fall within the scope of this enquiry, which is only concerned with Saint-Cyr. But the founder cannot be passed over by anyone who is trying to understand the foundation. That is why we must begin with Madame de Maintenon, for her personality left

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<sup>1)</sup> Haussonville, I, p. 88. (Lettre de l'évêque de Chartres.)

its mark so deeply engraven upon Saint-Cyr, that her spirit still seemed to govern the house even in the last days of its existence.

\* \* \* \*

2. Early life. Francoise d'Aubigne was born on November 27th, 1635, in the precincts of the prison at Niort. Her father, Constant d'Aubigné, had, in 1627, married Jeanne de Cardillac, the daughter of the governor of the prison of Château Trompette at Bordeaux, where he was confined at that time. Little is known of Madame d'Aubigné: she seems to have been an undemonstrative and stern woman, brave and capable, no doubt, but continually occupied with her worthless husband and interminable lawsuits,<sup>1)</sup> and with little affection to spare for either of her two surviving children. Françoise only remembered being kissed by her mother three times;<sup>2)</sup> and Mademoiselle d'Aumale tells how, on the voyage to Martinique, when the ship was in danger of being taken by pirates, the children comforted one another with the thought that then at least they would be no longer with their mother.<sup>3)</sup> This lack of affection in her own childhood helps to explain the apparent harshness of some of the regulations of Saint-Cyr.

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<sup>1)</sup> Corr. Gén. I, p. 19. 23 juillet, 1642.

<sup>2)</sup> Haussonville, I, p. 18.

<sup>3)</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

Constant d'Aubigné was the son of Théodore Agrippa, the Huguenot writer and soldier, and Françoise, though baptised a catholic, was brought up at first as a protestant. It is perhaps not fanciful to think that a certain protestant strain remained with her all her life. Her enemies were ready enough to accuse her of it,<sup>1)</sup> and her distaste for meditation,<sup>2)</sup> and her ideal of a "simple, upright, solid piety",<sup>3)</sup> might all be traced back to it. But she rarely speaks of her grandfather;<sup>4)</sup> and still less of her father, who, having been disinherited by Agrippa,<sup>5)</sup> married a wife whom he killed soon after and was imprisoned for treason at Bordeaux, where he married again. Set free in 1628, he continued the same life as before - gambling, debts and all sorts of disorders - and found himself in prison again from 1632 till the death of Richelieu. He was by that time the father of three children, of whom Françoise was the youngest. Of the two boys, the elder drowned himself when he was quite young, but Charles lived on to worry his family in much the same way as his father before him.

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1) Lettre à Fénelon. (Quoted Lavallée, ch. 10, p. 221.)

2) Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 119, 1694.

3) Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 190.

4) But cp. Lettres hist. II, p. 441.

5) Will of Agrippa d'Aubigné. (Oeuvres, vol. I, 1873.)

Her childhood  
in Martinique.

In 1645 Constant d'Aubigné obtained the post of governor of a small island in the West Indies, Marie-Calante. He went out there with his wife and family, only to find that there was no one to govern on his island, so he accepted a subordinate post in Martinique. Here they lived for two years. Madame d'Aubigné looked after the children's education herself, and they were made to write letters and read Plutarch and to talk of nothing but what they had read.<sup>1)</sup>

with M<sup>me</sup> de  
Villette.

The year 1647 sees the father dead and the family back again in France. Madame d'Aubigné, worried by financial affairs and lawsuits, sent Charles to be page to one aunt, Madame de Neuillant, while another aunt, Madame de Villette, took charge of Françoise. Here, in the castle of Mursay, an austere and imposing building,<sup>2)</sup> to which the castle of Maintenon bears a slight resemblance, she was brought up with her cousins, and was very happy. Her education, as was the fashion of the times, was entrusted to a chambermaid, who did little more than keep her clean and tidy, but whom she loved and whom she taught to read. Her love of teaching was innate in her, and, as she herself tells, the greatest punishment

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 47.

<sup>2)</sup>Haussonville, III. Introd<sup>n</sup>, p. V.



her governess could devise was to say: "Vous avez fait quelque chose mal à propos, vous ne me montrerez point à lire aujourd'hui par punition."<sup>1)</sup>

With M<sup>me</sup> de Neuillant.

Unfortunately for Françoise her happy life at Mursay soon came to an end. For Madame de Villette was a protestant, and another aunt, Madame de Neuillant, claimed that as her niece had been baptized a catholic, she should be brought up as a catholic. The queen-mother supported her claim, and Françoise was sent off to Niort. Here, for all education, she was set to learn Pibrac's quatrains by heart as she looked after her aunt's turkeys.<sup>2)</sup> Presently she was sent to the

With Ursulines at Niort.

Ursuline convent at Niort, where we are not told what she learnt, though we are told how she taught her classfellows, in order to help Mère Cèleste, a nun to whom she was much attached.<sup>3)</sup>

With Ursulines in Paris.

Madame de Neuillant's concern for the religious education of her niece was not great enough, however, to make her willing to pay the convent fees, so Françoise had to be taken away and divided her time for a while between her aunt and her mother, until she was finally sent to the Ursuline convent in the faubourg S. Jacques. This step was taken with the definite object of bringing her back to the catholic faith, and the

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>, II, p. 347.

<sup>2)</sup> Conseils .. aux dem. I, p. 98.

<sup>3)</sup> Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>, II, p. 345.

Her conversion  
to Catholicism.

earliest letter we have written by her is a desperate appeal to Madame de Villette to take her away. "Ah, Madame et tante," she writes, "vous n' imaginez l'enfer que m'est ceste maison soy-disant de Dieu, et les rudoiments, durtés et façons crueles de celles qu'on a fait gardiennes de mon corps, et de mon âme non, pource qu'elles n'y peuvent joindre."<sup>1)</sup> At last a nun, wiser than the rest, advised a change of tactics, and, Françoise, after hearing a catholic priest and a protestant minister debate before her for three days, was won over finally to catholicism and made her first communion.<sup>2)</sup>

Portrait as  
a child.

There is an interesting picture of her at this time, given by herself in a talk with Madame de Glapion in 1707.<sup>3)</sup>

"Premièrement," she says, "dans mon enfance, j'étais la meilleure petite créature que vous puissiez vous imaginer. J'avais un naturel excellent, le coeur bon, en un mot, j'étais véritablement ce qu'on appelle une bonne enfant, de manière que tout le monde m'aimait, et que, jusqu'aux valets et aux servantes de ma tante chez qui je demeurais alors, ils étaient tous charmés de moi, et cela parce que je ne pensais qu'à leur faire plaisir. Etant un peu plus grande, je demeurais dans

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<sup>1)</sup> Corr. Gén. I., p. 33. 12 Oct (1648?)

<sup>2)</sup> Mémoires sur M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon, p. 9. Haussonville. I. p. 23.

<sup>3)</sup> Lettres hist. II, p. 213.

des couvents; vous savez combien j'y étais aimé et de mes maîtresses et de mes compagnes; je vous l'ai conté plusieurs fois; elles étaient ravies de m'avoir, et toujours par la même raison: c'est que je leur rendais service, que je ne songeais qu'à les obliger et à me rendre leur servante à toutes depuis le matin jusqu'au soir." We shall find that this idea of making oneself useful is one which Madame de Maintenon continually emphasizes in her talks with the nuns and the girls.

3. Marriage  
with Scarron.  
1652.

It seems that, on leaving the convent, Françoise went to live with her mother who was then staying in Paris. One of the houses opposite was inhabited by Paul Scarron, the author, a man of distinguished wit and talent, whose house had become a sort of hotel de Rambouillet. But Scarron was never free from financial difficulties, and at this time was thinking of going to America, in the hopes of making a fortune. This may have been the reason why Madame d'Aubigné, who had recently come back from the West Indies, was invited to call on him, and went, taking with her Françoise, who was then about fifteen years old. Scarron was not only more than twice her age (he was born in 1610), but he was hopelessly paralysed. The

beauty and shyness of Mademoiselle d'Aubigné made a great impression on him, and when he discovered, from her letters,<sup>1)</sup> that she was as clever as she was beautiful, he asked her to marry him. It is doubtful whether Madame d'Aubigné was alive or not at that time, but the evidence points rather to her being dead and to Francoise being left in the charge of Madame de Neuillant.<sup>2)</sup> It was therefore a choice between entering a convent - and Scarron generously offered to pay her dowry if she wanted to become a nun - and marrying the crippled poet. She chose the latter: they were married in 1652, and she looked after him till his death, eight years later.

This marriage has been called the only diplomatic error Madame de Maintenon ever made; it was certainly far from an equal match, but it did not turn out as disastrously as might have been expected. Madame Scarron was noted for two qualities in particular - her extreme carefulness for her reputation, and her readiness to comply with her husband's wishes: "Il n'y a rien que j'en'eusse été capable de faire et de souffrir pour faire dire du bien de moi. Je me contraignais beaucoup; mais cela ne me coûtait rien, pourvu que j'eusse une belle réputation; c'était là ma folie."<sup>3)</sup> Here she is speaking

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<sup>1)</sup> Corr. Gén. I, p. 39-40.

<sup>2)</sup> Noailles I, ch. 5, p. 165. Corr. Gén. I, p. 36.  
Dyson. "M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon her life and times", ch. 3.

<sup>3)</sup> Lettres hist. II, p. 221.

of herself, but the same thing is said of her by Monsieur de Méré in a letter to the duchess of Lesdiguières, which runs: "Ce qui me fâche d'elle, je vous l'avoue, c'est qu'elle s'attache trop à son devoir malgré tous ceux qui tâchent de l'en corriger".<sup>1)</sup> These are two qualities whose importance she teaches again and again at Saint-Cyr, and it is interesting to see that she is speaking from her own experience.

If Scarron owed much of the comfort of his last years to his young wife, she was no less in his debt, though in a different way. In the first place, it was from him that she received the greater part of her education.<sup>2)</sup> It was he who formed her intelligence and it was at his table and in his drawing-room that she perfected her gift for conversation - a gift which she later regarded as a snare, because it won her so much admiration.<sup>3)</sup> Again, it was through Scarron that she first came into touch with the people who introduced her at court, particularly with Monsieur and Madame d'Albret. Thus, though the marriage was by no means an ideal one, posterity may be grateful for it: for without

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<sup>1)</sup> Publ. in Corr. Gén. I, p. 65-66, 1656. (Oeuvres du Chev. de Méré, t. II, lettre LXI.)

<sup>2)</sup> cp. Segrais. "Mme de Maintenon est redevable de son esprit à Scarron, et elle le connaît bien." Noailles, I, ch. 5, p. 179.

<sup>3)</sup> Haussonville, I, p. 51.

it there would have been no Madame de Maintenon, wife of Louis XIV, and consequently no Saint-Cyr.

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#### 4. Life after the death of Scarron.

Scarron left his widow badly off at his death. His debts amounted to twenty-two thousand francs, and his assets to ten thousand.<sup>1)</sup> Madame Scarron therefore retired into the convent of the Hospitalières de la Place-Royale where she was able to live without being a burden to anyone. After about a year she was granted a small pension by the queen mother, and went to her old convent, the Ursulines of the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. She had many friends, and looked back on this as one of the happiest times in her life.<sup>2)</sup>

#### Friends.

She often spent the summer with the Marquis and Marchioness of Montchevreuil at their country house, where she made herself invaluable<sup>3)</sup> and where she met Madame de Brinon, an Ursuline nun whose convent had been dispersed, and who was to play an important part in the foundation of Saint-Cyr. Her friends in town were mainly frequenters of the Hotels d'Albret and de Richelieu, and included Madame de Chalais, afterwards

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<sup>1)</sup>Corrès. Gén. I, p. 91.

<sup>2)</sup> Haussonville, I, p. 31.

<sup>3)</sup>Conseils ... aux Demoiselles, I, p. 42.

famous as the Princesse des Ursins, and Madame de Montespan, who had not yet become the favourite of Louis XIV. For a month or two after the death of the Queen Mother<sup>1)</sup> Madame Scarron's pension was not paid, but she was able to go on living in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques until it was granted to her again. It was about this time that she took as her confessor the abbé Gobelin. Many of her letters to him have been preserved, and it was his advice which she sought when she was drawing up the plan and the constitutions of her school.

5. Her life as  
governess to  
children of  
Louis XIV  
and M<sup>re</sup> de  
Montespan.

Madame de Montespan had come to know Madame Scarron at the Hotel d'Albret, and had seen that she was capable of giving herself entirely to the service of her friends, and that she was the soul of discretion. So when, in 1670, someone was wanted to bring up the illegitimate children she had borne to Louis XIV, Madame de Montespan naturally turned to Madame Scarron. At first the latter refused; she said that she would have nothing to do with them, unless the king were to ask her himself.<sup>2)</sup> The request came direct from him,

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<sup>1)</sup> 20th January, 1666.

<sup>2)</sup> M<sup>me</sup> de Caylus, Souvenirs. (Ed. Charpentier.) P. 33.  
cp. Corr. Gen., I, p. 142-3, note.

and the little duc du Maine was handed over to her charge as soon as he was born. There was an elder child, a girl who died quite young, and before long three others were entrusted to her care; the Comte de Vexin in 1672, Mademoiselle de Nantes in 1673, and Mademoiselle de Blois in 1674.<sup>1)</sup>

It was no sinecure that Madame Scarron had undertaken. At first the children lived with their nurses in different houses, so as to arouse less suspicion, and she was obliged to go perpetually from one to the other. When at last they were all brought together in a house in the rue de Vaugirard her difficulties were by no means over. The children, especially the duc du Maine, were delicate and constantly ill, and the eldest died.<sup>2)</sup> Moreover, few people were allowed into the house, so that much heavy work fell on Madame Scarron herself.<sup>3)</sup> At first, too, she had to conceal what she was doing from her friends and see them as usual so as not to arouse their suspicions. But when the third child was born in 1672 she found she could keep up the pretence no longer, and she was obliged to leave her friends without being able to explain why. For over a year she lived in retirement, until in December 1673 the children were declared

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<sup>1)</sup> Noailles, I. ch. 7. p. 343.

<sup>2)</sup> In 1672.

<sup>3)</sup> Lettres hist., II, p. 461.



legitimate by act of Parliament, and quarters were assigned to them at court. To court therefore they came, accompanied by Madame Scarron, who was destined not to leave it till the death of the king.

Quarrels with  
M<sup>me</sup> de  
Montespan.

It is clear from what Madame de Maintenon wrote and said herself that her life at court was always irksome to her.<sup>1)</sup> Her difficulties there began with Madame de Montespan. In spite of their former friendship, Madame de Montespan was now jealous of Madame Scarron and ready to quarrel with her.<sup>2)</sup> On her side, Madame Scarron thought that the children were badly cared for and badly brought up by their mother.<sup>3)</sup> She was therefore genuinely anxious to leave the court, and in 1675 an opportunity to do so seemed to be given her, for her financial difficulties at least were removed. Louis XIV paid her 200,000 francs in recognition of her services,<sup>4)</sup> and she bought the castle of Maintenon. Moreover, he formally addressed her as "Madame de Maintenon", and it was by that name that she was known thereafter.<sup>5)</sup>

Buys the castle  
of Maintenon.

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<sup>1)</sup> Corr. Gén., I, p. 209, cp. Lettres Hist., II, pp. 454 and 102.

<sup>2)</sup> M<sup>me</sup> de Sévigné, Lettres, 7 Aout, 1675.

<sup>3)</sup> Corr. Gén., I, p. 233, and Corr. Gén., I, p. 247.

<sup>4)</sup> Noailles, I, ch. 9, p. 484.

<sup>5)</sup> Corr. Gén., I, p. 248-9.

Remains at  
Court.

Nevertheless, she still remained at court, kept back probably by the knowledge that the children still needed her and that the abbé Gobelin wished her to stay.<sup>1)</sup> The quarrels with Madame de Montespan became more frequent. There had been peace for a while when Madame de Maintenon had taken the duc du Maine to Barège, and when there had been a temporary break in the relations between Madame de Montespan and the king.<sup>2)</sup> But the estrangement was short-lived, and by 1676 everything was as before. It was at this time and in Madame de Montespan's company that the king came to know and to appreciate Madame de Maintenon. He had avoided her at first, considering her merely as a "précieuse".<sup>3)</sup> Then he had been touched by her love for the children;<sup>4)</sup> the charm of her conversation had impressed him,<sup>5)</sup> and he had found her "solidity" a relief after the uncertain temper of Madame de Montespan.<sup>6)</sup> Thus while the latter's favour was waning - for her place was soon to be taken by Madame de Fontanges - that of Madame de Maintenon was increasing steadily

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1) Corr. Gén., I, p. 295.

2) Lent, 1675, until June or July.

3) Lettres Hist., II, p. 454.

4) Noailles, I, ch. 7, p. 354.

5) Mme de Sévigné, Lettres, 17 juillet, 1680.

6) Noailles, II, ch. 3, p. 196.

Appointed lady-in-waiting to the Dauphine.

A proof of her favour, if any proof were needed, was given in 1679, when she was appointed second lady-in-waiting to the Dauphine. The Dauphine, Anne-Marie-Victoria of Bavaria, far from being the kind of princess all had hoped for, whose gaiety would enliven the whole court, was moody and suspicious and incurably foreign in her ways. Thus the post of lady-in-waiting to her was in some ways a trying one, but it conferred one great benefit on Madame de Maintenon: she was thenceforward independent of Madame de Montespan.

6. Her marriage to Louis XIV.

In 1683 the queen, Marie-Thérèse, died. Madame de Maintenon had made use of her favour with the king to try and win him back from his favourites to the queen, and she had succeeded in part.<sup>1)</sup> It was of the first importance that he should not be allowed to go back to his old ways, and it was to Madame de Maintenon that all looked to bring him through the crisis. She had wanted again to leave the court, but that she was not allowed to do.<sup>2)</sup> The king went to stay at Fontainebleau, and Madame de Maintenon was

Journey to Fontainebleau.

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<sup>1)</sup> cp. Haussonville, vol. I, p. 77.

<sup>2)</sup> cp. Noailles, vol. II, ch. 1, p. 42. Le duc de la Rochefoucauld says: "Ce n'est pas le temps, Madame, de le quitter; dans l'état où il est il a besoin de vous."

among the ladies of the court who accompanied him. It seems most probable that it was then that the marriage was decided. Her letters betray an unusual excitement and anxiety, and Madame de Caylus tells how her aunt used to complain of headaches and go for long days into the forest accompanied only by Madame de Montchevreuil.<sup>1)</sup> Then, when once the marriage is settled, the note of uneasiness ceases,<sup>2)</sup> and though she never mentions it, it is clear from her letters after 1684 that her position at court is entirely changed.<sup>3)</sup>

#### The marriage.

The secret of the marriage was well kept. Far from wishing it to be declared openly, as Saint-Simon affirms,<sup>4)</sup> Madame de Maintenon herself destroyed all her letters from the king and all the other evidence. The date of it is uncertain, but it probably took place at the end of 1683 or the beginning of 1684. It was celebrated at midnight in the chapel of Versailles, and the only witnesses were Harlay, archbishop of Paris, the Pere La Chaise, Monsieur de

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1) Souvenirs de M<sup>me</sup> de Caylus, p. 134.

2) Corr. Gén., II, p. 322, pub. Charpentier.

3) cp. Geffroy, I, p. 178, 27 juillet, 1686, and Corr. Gén., III, p. 2.

4) S. Simon. vol. XII, p. 111.

Montchevreuil, Monsieur de Louvois, and Bontemps, the major-domo of Versailles.<sup>1)</sup>

Reason for  
marrying the  
king - to  
work for his  
"salut".

If Louis XIV's conduct in marrying Madame de Maintenon leaves one wondering, the motive that governed Madame de Maintenon is at least clear. It was not ambition nor any thought of personal aggrandisement. When she talks about her life at court she may exaggerate its hardships, for her object is to make her hearers content with their own lot: but her dislike of it is genuine. She was no courtier: she was not born great; she had "greatness thrust upon her".<sup>2)</sup> She married the king because she believed it to be her mission to bring him to Christian ways of living and a Christian death. For her confessors told her again and again that God was using her as His instrument in that work. "C'est par vous qu'il le veut sauver",<sup>3)</sup> the bishop of Chartres wrote to her in 1698. Henceforward, all her life is directed to this one end.<sup>4)</sup> Alone with the

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1) Haussonville, I. p. 82-92.  
Mémoires sur Mme de Maintenon. p. 29.  
S. Simon, vol. XII. p. 99.  
Corr. Gén., IV, p. 193-197.

2) Lettres Hist., II, p. 277.

3) Corr. Gén., 4, p. 220.

4) Corr. Gén., 3, p. 204.  
" " 3, p. 211.  
" " 4, p. 53.  
Haussonville, I, p. 90.

king, she does all she can to make religion attractive to him; and she sees in the public events of the nation, in war and peace, so many helps or hindrances to "le salut du roi".<sup>1)</sup>

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#### 7. Her life at court.

Madame de Maintenon has left in her "Letters" and "Conversations" a vivid picture of her life at court. What strikes us most about it, is the number of her occupations. For it must never be forgotten that, though it is Saint-Cyr which concerns us here, Saint-Cyr was only a hobby, an interest to which she devoted such time as she could spare from other duties. She was brought into everything, political questions,<sup>2)</sup> religious questions,<sup>3)</sup> social questions, especially that of keeping the peace in the royal household.<sup>4)</sup> Above all, her mission to the king had to be fulfilled. He was always in her thoughts, and she

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1) Lettres Hist., II, p. 145. Geffroy, II, p. 87, 15 juin (1706).

2) cp. Geffroy, II, p. 180 (Note).

3) Lavallée, ch. 10. p. 219...  
Lettres hist., II, p. 196.

4) Corr. Gén., III, p. 231...  
Lettres hist., II, p. 197.

had to be ready at all times to amuse, console or encourage and sometimes to sadden him by telling him the things that no one else dared to say.<sup>1)</sup>

The most famous description of her life at Versailles is given in the report of a talk she had with Madame de Glapion, her great friend at Saint-Cyr.<sup>2)</sup> She tells how she has to rise early in the morning, so as to have time for her devotions and to hear Mass before her visitors begin to arrive. This is at half-past seven, and from then until after ten at night there is a constant succession of them, so that she cannot dress or eat or go to bed in comfort. Even when the court left Versailles for the simpler life of Marly or Fontainebleau, her days were just as full, for there she took an interest in the villagers and visited them and taught their children.<sup>3)</sup> And all the time, she had letters to write to members of the royal family, to officials of Church and State, to her own family and friends, and to the nuns and girls of Saint-Cyr. It is astonishing that she managed to accomplish all that she did, even with the help of such a secretary as Mademoiselle d'Aumale.

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1) Geffroy, I, p. 208. Prière de Mme de Maintenon: "donnez-moi de le réjouir, de le consoler, de l'encourager, et de l'attrister aussi lorsqu'il le faut pour votre gloire".

2) Lettres Hist., II, p. 153...

3) Lettres hist., II, p. 247. (Fontainebleau).  
Conseils aux Demoiselles. II. p. 285. (Marly).

Corr. Gén., IV, p. 252. (Compiègne).

Death of the  
king.

Thus her days went by until a great change came in her position with the death of the king in 1715. He was not ill for long, and until his last illness it was Madame de Maintenon who appeared the older and the more infirm of the two.<sup>1)</sup> She did everything there was to be done for him when he was dying, and helped him to arrange his temporal affairs and to think of his spiritual ones. When she could no longer be of any use to him she finally left the court and retired to Saint-Cyr. She has been criticised both for going away before he had breathed his last, and for her want of feeling in hardly ever speaking of him after his death. But this is not necessarily to be attributed to a want of feeling. "Avez-vous su dans quelle disposition le roi est mort?" she writes to Madame de Montalembert: "Tous les gens de bien ne doutent point de son salut; je n'ai plus qu'à penser au mien."<sup>2)</sup>

8. Retirement  
to St. Cyr.

After the death of the king Madame de Maintenon lived at Saint-Cyr in almost complete retirement.<sup>3)</sup> She dismissed her servants, sold her carriage, and adapted herself as

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<sup>1)</sup> Geffroy, II, p. 329, 23 juillet, 1713.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres hist., II, p. 440.

<sup>3)</sup> Geffroy, II, p. 374, 7 sep., 1715. For her life at this time cp. Haussonville, III, and last of the Lettres Hist. II, p. 435 onward.



completely as possible to the ordinary routine, even giving up little luxuries so as not to introduce them into the house. Far from being in her second childhood, as her enemies said,<sup>1)</sup> she kept up a keen interest in public events. She read and enjoyed books, she helped to train the novices, she taught the various classes, and she took entire charge of one little girl, Mademoiselle de Latourp. In all this she was helped by Mademoiselle d'Aumale, her secretary and general attendant. Her correspondence naturally was not as great as before, for she was now living with the nuns to whom so many of her letters had been addressed, but she still wrote a great deal, especially to her niece, Madame de Caylus. She received as few visitors as possible, but she was not able to refuse to see the Czar, Peter the Great, who came to inspect Saint-Cyr, and who wanted to be presented to Madame de Maintenon too.<sup>2)</sup> He found her in bed suffering from what she described as "une grande vieillesse avec un tempérament assez faible", and the account of his visit forms the subject of one of her last letters to Madame Caylus.

There is no cure for "old age and a feeble constitution". Madame de Maintenon was eighty years old when she retired to Saint-Cyr, and she only survived the king by four years.

Visit of the  
Czar.

Death.

1) S. Simon, vol. XVI, p. 241-46.

2) Haussonville, III, p. 203...

The news of the arrest of her favourite, the Duc du Maine, in connection with the conspiracy of Cellamare came to her as a shock from which she never recovered. She died on April 15th, 1719 at the Royal House of Saint-Cyr, and was buried in the choir of the chapel.<sup>1)</sup>

### 9. Portrait of Madame de Maintenon.

In studying what Madame de Maintenon did, it is easy to lose sight of what she was. Yet it is important that this should be kept steadily in view, for it was her personality which left its mark upon Saint-Cyr.

### Appearance.

It is possible to have quite a definite impression of what Madame de Maintenon looked like, thanks to the various portraits and descriptions of her that still exist. She says herself she was not beautiful,<sup>2)</sup> but she was certainly attractive, with an oval face, high forehead, curly brown hair and brown eyes.<sup>3)</sup> Even when she was old people noticed the beauty of her eyes. "La Maintenon a toujours conservé la beauté de ses yeux," says her old enemy, Madame, in 1719<sup>4)</sup> and in 1716 Madame de Maintenon writes to Madame de Caylus:

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<sup>1)</sup> For an account of what happened to her tomb after 1794 cp. Lavallée, ch. 16, p. 385....

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres hist., II, p. 214.

<sup>3)</sup> Noailles, I, ch. 5, p. 185.... Among her portraits those of Ferdinand and Mignard should be specially mentioned.

<sup>4)</sup> Lettre de Madame, 12 août, 1719.

"Remerciez bien Monsieur de Dangeau de la permission qu'il me donne sur ses Mémoires ... il m'écrit quatre mots fort galants; il y a longtemps que je n'avais ouï parler de la beauté de mes yeux."<sup>1)</sup> But the general impression was more one of dignity than of beauty. She was tall and held herself well, and at first sight she looked almost severe,<sup>2)</sup> but the severity disappeared when she began to talk or smile.<sup>2)</sup> As for her clothes, her position at court demanded that she should be suitably dressed, and she had a knack of wearing her things so that the simplest materials and fashions looked graceful and dignified on her.<sup>3)</sup> Nevertheless she cared very little about dress, and even at court allowed herself no luxuries<sup>4)</sup> and dressed as simply as possible.<sup>5)</sup> She used to get Madame de Caylus to buy dresses for her, and was horrified at the youthfulness of the fashions and the price she had to pay.<sup>6)</sup> But, though vanity was not one of her failings, she

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<sup>1)</sup> Haussonville, III, p. 113, 21 juin (1716).

<sup>2)</sup> Dames de St. Louis, quoted Noailles, III, ch. 3, p. 537

<sup>3)</sup> Conseils aux Demoiselles, I, p. 101-103.

<sup>4)</sup> Haussonville, I, p. 187.

<sup>5)</sup> Corr. Gén., I, p. 256.

<sup>6)</sup> Geffroy, II, p. 53, 9 mai (1705).  
       "      "      p. 78, 23 avril (1706).

could understand girls being fond of bright colours and attractive clothes.<sup>1)</sup>

Character.

1) piety.

The outstanding trait in her character is one which has been mentioned already, her "simple, upright, solid" piety.<sup>2)</sup> Madame de Maintenon was no saint and no mystic: her religion was essentially practical, but it was at the root of all she did. Her aim in staying at court was to work for "le salut du roi": her object in founding Saint-Cyr was to bring about "the perfection of Christianity"<sup>3)</sup> throughout the kingdom. She hated anything that marred the outward unity of the catholic church, and condemned protestants, quietists and jansenists alike.<sup>4)</sup> It was her religious zeal and no political motives that made her work for the conversion of the huguenot members of her family<sup>5)</sup> and abandon her friends, Fénelon<sup>6)</sup>

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>., II, p. 350, 12 jan., 1715.

2) cp. Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>., I, p. 190, jan., 1695.

3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé ... ch. 2.

4) Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>., II, p. 363-369, 1715.

5) Corr. Gén., II, p. 133.

Mémoires sur M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon, p. 36.

Souvenirs de M<sup>me</sup> de Caylus (ed. Charpentier), p. 21.

6) Lavallée, ch., 9. p. 198.

and Noailles,<sup>1)</sup> when they were implicated in the troubles that arose about quietism and jansenism respectively. For herself, she had no wish for any wide knowledge in theological matters. She was always willing and even anxious to be advised by her confessor;<sup>2)</sup> but what she read, she knew, and endeavoured to put into practice. All her life she gave away a great deal in alms<sup>3)</sup> and interested herself in work for others. But she did not make the mistake of thinking that the spiritual life consists merely in these works of charity. She saw the difficulty of keeping the outward and the inward side of religion in their right proportions: "La dévotion qui, sous prétexte de s'attacher au solide, dédaigne et méprise les moindres pratiques de l'Eglise, tient de la superbe: celle, au contraire, qui la fait consister en ces sortes de choses, sans s'acquitter des premiers devoirs de la religion, est superstitieuse."<sup>4)</sup> She therefore taught incessantly, both by word and example, "une piété droite, simple, sans raffinement, qui consiste en l'éloignement du péché, à marcher dans la présence de Dieu, et à se laisser conduire avec simplicité."<sup>5)</sup>

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1) Lavallée, ch. 12, p. 267.

2) Haussonville, I, p. 186.

3) Haussonville, II, p. 278.

4) Lettres .. sur l'éducation, II, p. 172-177.

5) Lettres Hist., I, p. 36.

ii) love of  
teaching.

Another side of her nature which must be noticed is her genius for teaching. She had all the qualities necessary for a teacher, and, as we have seen already, she loved teaching from the time she was a child. It is impossible to read her letters without being struck by her intelligence, though she had a horror of appearing learned.<sup>1)</sup> She was not deeply read, according to present-day ideas, but she understood Latin, Italian and Spanish.<sup>2)</sup> She followed the affairs of the time with interest,<sup>3)</sup> and she wrote her own language in a style which even her enemy Saint-Simon calls "naturellement éloquent et court".<sup>4)</sup> Again, she was methodical and business-like.<sup>5)</sup> For instance, she used to plan out her own days, and was quite ready to undertake to do the same for Saint-Cyr.<sup>6)</sup> She hated waste, whether of money or time,<sup>7)</sup> and inefficiency,<sup>8)</sup> and she used to train the nuns to look

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1) Haussonville, I, p. 189.

2) Ibid., p. 189.

3) Ibid., III, p. 79, 16 fév., 1716.

4) S. Simon, Vol. XII, p. 101.

5) Corr. Gén., I, p. 258.

6) Ibid., II, p. 414.

7) Ibid., II, p. 221.

8) Ibid., II, p. 257-59, cp. Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>, II, p. 125-26.

after their affairs themselves. Closely connected with this is her thoroughness over the detail of her work. She knew every corner of Saint-Cyr and was as ready to see to the preparation of a meal in the kitchen<sup>1)</sup> as to teach the senior class in the school.

Intelligence, method, thoroughness are all necessary qualities for a teacher, but there are others more necessary still. Madame de Maintenon was endowed with these too. Firstly, she had the power of inspiring confidence and respect. Nuns, novices, girls, all turned to her easily for advice, which she was always ready to give. She taught the nuns how important it was that they should win the respect of their pupils, even if they did not win their affection.<sup>2)</sup> But she herself was both respected and loved and she writes in 1682 "Je suis ravie de ce que l'on m'aime chez vous plus que l'on ne me craint."<sup>3)</sup> Secondly, and most important of all, she loved teaching. "Ma folie est l'instruction," she writes to Madame du Pirou;<sup>4)</sup> and again, to the Princesse des Ursins in 1713 she says: "Toutes les fois que vous voudrez me donner

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1) Lettres hist., I, p. 337.

2) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>, I, p. 23.

3) Corr. Gén., II, p. 263.

4) Lettres hist., II, p. 322.

des louanges sur ma capacité sur l'éducation des enfants, je les avalerai à longs traits; car je suis véritablement persuadée que j'en sais beaucoup là-dessus."<sup>1)</sup> Many other examples of her love of teaching can be found in her letters, but it did not exist only in theory, for she put it into practice too. She taught from the early days at Rueil to her last years at Saint-Cyr. Accounts of her lessons still exist, and those who heard them remark on her patience and the energy she put into her teaching. Nor was she content with teaching in the classes. In addition, she had nearly always some child - her niece, or the duchess of Burgundy, or Jeannette de Pincre or Mademoiselle de Latourp - whom she brought up herself in her own room and for whose education she alone was responsible. It is not without reason, therefore, that the only title which she is given in the notice of her death is that of "Institutrice de la Maison de Saint-Cyr".<sup>2)</sup>

It would be convenient if Madame de Maintenon's character could be summed up under the two headings of love of God and love of teaching, but to do so would be to sacrifice truth to simplicity. It is true that these are her outstanding characteristics, but hers was a complex personality possessing many sides which must not be ignored.

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<sup>1)</sup> Geffroy, II, p. 325, 31 mars, 1713.

<sup>2)</sup> Acte de décès. (Bibl. Nat. fonds fr. 11676.)



iii) other  
characteristics.

An obvious criticism of what has been said of Madame de Maintenon is that, if it is at all a fair presentation of her character, she might have evoked respect and admiration, but nothing more: it is impossible to think of anyone loving her. Many people have indeed regarded her in this light. For them, her estimable qualities loom so large that their feeling for her stops short at esteem. Nevertheless, her charm must not be forgotten, and it must have been a charm of no common kind if it had power to attract men as different as Paul Scarron and Louis XIV. She had an unusual power of sympathy and a desire to help and to please. Everyone came to her when they were in sorrow,<sup>1)</sup> and her helpfulness to her friends has been noticed already as the reason for her introduction at court. Lastly, she was not always serious, and in the rare moments when she allows herself to relax she writes in a delightfully gay and light-hearted manner.<sup>2)</sup>

charm.

desire to  
please.

wit.

Her faults.

It would be absurd to pretend that Madame de Maintenon had no faults. Saint-Simon and Madame hardly concede that she had any virtues, and for a long time people were misled by them and thought of her as the type of moral laxity and

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1) Lettres hist., II, p. 275.

2) cp. any of her letters to the Comte d'Ayen, Corrés. Gén. IV.

selfish ambition, all the more horrible because hidden beneath a cloak of hypocritical devotion. Fortunately, history has cleared her of these serious charges, but it does not claim that she was perfect.<sup>1)</sup> For instance, it is difficult to excuse the way in which she deserted Fénelon or Noailles, even when one understands her motives and altogether there was a hardness and a lack of spontaneity about her actions which detract from her charm. Her principles of treating her friends as though they would some day become her enemies,<sup>2)</sup> and of writing nothing which she would not be ready to show to the whole world, may be excellent counsels of prudence, but lead to an unnatural and unattractive restraint. Undoubtedly, too, she made mistakes, but possibly many of them were due, as has been suggested,<sup>3)</sup> to the fact that she was not quite equal, intellectually or socially, to the position which she held at court, but was a much more ordinary person than she was generally supposed to be.

It is at Saint-Cyr that Madame de Maintenon is seen to the best advantage, and it is to Saint-Cyr that we must turn our attention now.

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1) Corr. Gén., III, p. 259.

2) Lettres hist., II, p. 72.

3) Revue littéraire, Jan., Fév., 1887. Critique de: "Geffroy, Mme de Maintenon d'après sa correspondance authentique."

## II. THE HISTORY OF SAINT-CYR.

### SYNOPSIS.

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3. Rueil - teachers and pupils - religious education, domestic training - instruction. M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon's interest in it. 37 p. 40
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## II. THE HISTORY OF SAINT-CYR.

§1.  
S. Cyr grew  
by degrees.

When Madame de Maintenon first began to interest herself in the education of girls, her only object was to spare them what she had suffered herself. She was no exception to the rule that everyone argues from his own experience. She had known what it was to be of good family, but poor, and she had not been happy as a child. She desired to help people like herself, and this desire, together with her natural love of teaching, made her consider that to provide such girls with a sound education was preferable to any other form of almsgiving.<sup>1)</sup> She had no thought of establishing a large or lasting foundation like Saint-Cyr: Saint-Cyr grew by degrees: "Dieu... a jeté les fondements de la maison de Saint-Louis sans que la personne dont il s'est servi en eust aucune idée".<sup>2)</sup> Or, as she says of it herself: "Dieu a conduit Saint-Cyr par degrés.... En projetant de faire tout le bien possible, je ne projetai point de le faire encore apres ma mort."<sup>3)</sup>

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1) "Surtout elle aimait a donner aux filles pauvres une éducation sainte et laborieuse, et elle n'y épargnait rien." Languet de Gergy. Mémoires inédites, I, p. 93. (quoted Lavalée, ch. 3, p. 43.)

2) Lettre circulaire des Soeurs de la Visitation Sainte Marie qui sont à présent en la Maison Royale de St. Louis à St. Cyr. 1 juillet, 1698.

3) Noailles III, ch. 1, p. 1.

§ 2.  
Montmorency.

Thus Saint-Cyr began in a very humble way. Madame de Brinon, the Ursuline nun whom Madame de Maintenon had met at Montchevreuil, had been forced to leave her convent, which had closed for lack of funds, and had taken a house at Auvers,<sup>1)</sup> where she educated one or two girls. Madame de Maintenon was interested in her and promised to send her more pupils and pay their fees if the school were moved nearer Paris. So Madame de Brinon and her companions, two or three other Ursulines, came to Montmorency and settled down there. Madame de Maintenon not only sent her pupils and paid a hundred francs for their fees, but also took a general interest in their education. They were only little peasant girls from her estate at Maintenon, and she wanted them to be given an education suitable to their condition. So she wrote to Madame de Brinon in 1680: "Il faut, s'il vous plaît, qu'elles apprennent leur religion, à lire en français, à écrire et à compter, et du reste à servir à tout ce qu'il y a de plus grossier, autant que leur âge le peut permettre".<sup>2)</sup> The school was a success; Madame de Maintenon had a high opinion of Madame de Brinon, and when the numbers grew too big for Montmorency, she bought a

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<sup>1)</sup>Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé...., ch. 1.

<sup>2)</sup>Corr. Gén. II, p. 110.

house for them at Rueil and settled them down there.

\* \* \*

§3  
Rueil -  
teachers and  
pupils.

The house at Rueil was a large one, with a garden and several outhouses, such as a barn and various sheds, which were turned into quarters for the school.<sup>1)</sup> The establishment now consisted of Madame de Brinon, her cousin, Madame de Saint-Pierre, two or three other nuns, ten girls of good family and forty peasant girls from Maintenon. Madame de Maintenon thought very highly of Madame de Brinon's abilities and they were great friends, though Madame de Maintenon disapproved of the other's succession of visitors.<sup>2)</sup> and laughed at the plays<sup>3)</sup> she wrote. The other nuns were not so capable; in fact, she can find nothing to praise in them except their willingness to learn:<sup>4)</sup> they were stupid and ignorant and unbusinesslike: "Vos mères sont les plus sottes créatures que j'aie jamais

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1) Corr. Gén. II, p. 229.

2) ibid. II, p. 265.

3) ibid. II, p. 222.

4) ibid. II, p. 225.

vues".<sup>1)</sup> she writes in exasperation at last, though she usually showed a remarkable amount of patience in training them. She suggested that they should be helped in the work of the general supervision of the peasant girls, and of teaching them to sew, by one or two women, not nuns, who could give their whole time to it.<sup>2)</sup> She would have been glad, too, to have had some elder girls among the ten boarders who could have helped to look after the younger ones.<sup>3)</sup> The two types of pupils were kept distinct and did not receive the same education, for Madame de Maintenon did not believe in educating people out of their sphere.<sup>4)</sup> When she sends her niece to Rueil, it is with full instructions that she is to practise her music and read Spanish:<sup>5)</sup> but of the little peasants she says: "Nous aurons toujours beaucoup fait quand elles seront instruites de leur religion, et accoutumées à travailler depuis le matin jusqu'au soir".<sup>6)</sup>

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1) Corr. Gén. II, p. 259.

2) *ibid.* II, p. 225.

3) *ibid.* II, p. 226.

4) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé..., ch. 1. "M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon ne voulant qu'elles fussent élevées dans un autre esprit que celui qui leur convenait."

5) Corr. Gén. II, p. 251.

6) *ibid.* p. 310.



Rueil -  
education.

Thus from the very outset Madame de Maintenon gave to religious education the first place in her scheme.

1)religious

Rich and poor alike were to be taught the catechism<sup>1)</sup> and instructed in their religion.<sup>2)</sup> Madame de Maintenon was ready to do both<sup>3)</sup> and the earliest educational writing of hers that we possess are maxims for the "filles bleues" or peasant girls of Rueil, on the different duties of rich and poor.<sup>4)</sup>

2)domestic.

Next in importance to religious education came training in domestic work, in sewing, spinning, knitting and the like. This was to serve a double purpose;<sup>5)</sup> it was not only to teach the girls useful things, but it was also to keep them employed. Madame de Maintenon hated all sorts of fancy work and she was not at all anxious for her girls to be taught even lace-making,<sup>6)</sup> but she would rather

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1)Corr. Gén. II, p. 270.

2)ibid. p. 319.

3)ibid. p. 281.

4)Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>., I, p. 1.

5)Corr. Gen. II, p. 234.

6)ibid. p. 234.

have them to do that than nothing. She established a kind of trade between Maintenon and Rueil:<sup>1)</sup> the people from her estate at Maintenon were to send so much flax every month to Rueil by a cart that went up to Paris every Thursday; the girls would spin it and send it back by the same carrier on one of his return journeys. It is not clear whether the scheme was ever tried, for Madame de Brinon seems to have had some difficulty in understanding what she had to do,<sup>2)</sup> and it had to be explained to her more than once.

3) instruction.

Very little is said about the instruction given at Rueil. The boarders were taught to read and write and spell,<sup>3)</sup> and it was for their benefit that Madame de Brinon wrote the plays of which Madame de Maintenon disapproved. We do not know, however, what use was made of them, or whether they were ever acted. On the whole, it seems that there was a minimum of intellectual education, and though punishments<sup>4)</sup> and prizes<sup>5)</sup> are mentioned, especially the latter, it is impossible to tell for what they were given.

1) Corr. Gén. II, p. 285 & p. 288.

2) Ibid. II, p. 290.

3) Ibid. II, p. 286 & p. 307.

4) Ibid. II, p. 225, "... la fille qui donne si bien le fouet .. "

5) Ibid. II, p. 233, p. 254 & p. 265.

Madame de Maintenon's interest in Rueil.

Madame de Maintenon's interest in the school was not confined to the education given there but extended to all the domestic details. It was she who supervised the finances, and trained Madame de Saint-Pierre to keep accounts and to be businesslike<sup>1)</sup>. But though she wanted the school to be managed economically, she urged Madame de Saint-Pierre to give the girls plenty to eat,<sup>2)</sup> and sent them presents of butter and jam<sup>3)</sup>. She suspected that they were not being given enough, because they were so often ill<sup>4)</sup>. There were indeed many epidemics<sup>5)</sup>, especially of smallpox, during which Madame de Maintenon did all she could to help<sup>6)</sup>, sending down medicines and suggesting how to treat the patients and keep the infection from spreading. Lastly, she noticed the girls' clothes, and insisted that these should be warm<sup>7)</sup> and well fitting<sup>8)</sup> and properly looked after<sup>9)</sup> and mended. It is not surprising that, with all this care and trouble, the school at Rueil flourished<sup>10)</sup> and increased to such an extent that larger quarters had to be found for it.

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1) Corr. Gén. II, p. 258.

2) *ibid.* II, p. 229, 239.

3) *ibid.* II, p. 229.

4) *ibid.* II, p. 292.

5) *ibid.* II, p. 257, 281.

6) *ibid.* II, p. 283, 284.

7) *ibid.* II, p. 254.

8) *ibid.* II, p. 286.

9) *ibid.* II, p. 226.

10) Corr. Gén. II, p. 236.

§4  
The school  
transferred  
to Noisy.

At this time, in 1684, the palace of Versailles had just been built<sup>1)</sup>. The castle of Noisy was one of its dependencies and, wishing to please Madame de Maintenon - the marriage had just taken place - and flattered by her appeal to his generosity, the king gave her this house, altered and furnished so as to be suitable for the school. The whole establishment was therefore transferred from Rueil to Noisy at the beginning of February, 1684<sup>2)</sup>.

Noisy - Founda-  
tion and aim.

The foundation at Noisy was on a much larger scale than that of Rueil, though it still was a temporary arrangement and there was no guarantee that it would last for long. The school held a hundred girls, not all noble, but all of gentle birth, whose education was paid for by the king<sup>3)</sup>. The king preferred to assist this class of his subjects rather than the humbler sort, for he felt that they were

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1) cp. Lavalée, ch. 3, p. 45.

2) Corr. Gén. II, p. 333.

3) ibid. p. 383.

both more to be pitied in their misfortunes<sup>1)</sup> and that their education was of more importance for the State because of the influence that they would one day exercise. It is clear that this consideration carried weight with Madame de Maintenon too: she hoped that Noisy would benefit not only the girls brought up there but many others besides<sup>2)</sup>, by being a model for other communities and by sending out its scholars to spread the education they had received throughout the length and breadth of France. For Noisy was in no sense a religious community and the girls were to be trained not for the cloister for for the home<sup>3)</sup>. Madame de Brinon and her companions were certainly nuns<sup>4)</sup>; there was a chapel with the usual services, and religious education occupied the first place in the training given there. But it was a religious education of such a kind as would help and guide them in the world<sup>5)</sup>; "Qu'on les eleve en seculieres, bonnes chretiennes, sans exiger d'elles des pratiques religieuses, comme de n'oser lever les yeux" is one of her notes for the mistresses of Noisy in 1685.

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé. ch. 3.

2) Corr. Gén. II, p. 359.

3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé, ch. 3.

4) Even at Rueil Mme. de Brinon had been anxious to have permission to have Mass celebrated in the chapel. It was granted in 1683. Certain relics of S. Candide were kept in the chapel at Noisy.

5) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 4.

Noisy -  
education.

The girls were therefore to be given a sound education based on religion as a preparation for life in the world.

The secular side of their instruction consisted in a study of their own language,<sup>1)</sup> reading, writing, spelling, a little history, a little music and a good deal of learning by heart, besides all sorts of manual and domestic work such as sewing, knitting and embroidery.<sup>2)</sup> They were divided into

Classes.

four classes, each of which had a distinctive colour of ribbon on their uniform,<sup>3)</sup> red for the eldest, green for the next, yellow for the next and blue for the youngest ones.

Uniform.

The uniform consisted of a brown stuff dress<sup>4)</sup> with a lace frill round the neck, a cloak of the same material, a white cap and a black or green apron edged with their class colour: they wore the same colour of ribbon on their hair and had sashes of it too. After describing their dress the author of the "Mémoires des Dames de S. Louis" makes this comment on it: "Tout cela, quand il est mis proprement, est un habit qui ne laisse pas d'avoir un air de noblesse, et de faire un assez bon effet au chœur quand toutes les demoiselles y sont assemblées." It looks as though

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé. ch. 3.

2) The girls embroidered a bedspread for the King.

3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé. ch.3, cp. Corr. Gén. II, p. 353, 400.

4) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé. ch.3

Louis XIV's love of symmetry had penetrated beyond the walls of Versailles.

M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon at Noisy.

1) training teachers.

There was no regular community at Noisy. Madame de Brinon was the superior, Madame de Saint Pierre bursar and housekeeper, but the teaching and the other duties were simply entrusted to various "Ladies" and they had to be trained for the work. It was for them, therefore, that Madame de Maintenon wrote the "Notes pour les Maîtresses de Noisy"<sup>1)</sup> and the "Règlement pour les Maîtresses de classe",<sup>2)</sup> both published by Lavallee in the "Lettres et Entretiens sur l'Education des Filles". In these notes she emphasizes the importance of their all working together and having no favourites. She lays down excellent principles for them to observe in correcting anyone, saying that they should distinguish between various kinds of faults and know when to pass things over; and above all she inspires them with the thought that their aim and object is to educate the girls entrusted to them, and education is not the work of an hour, after which they are free to leave their pupils, but demands all their life. Her precepts for

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1) Lettres.. sur l'Educa<sup>n</sup>., I, p. 3.

2) Ibid., I, p. 7.

the instruction of the girls are marked by the same good sense: though she would not have her pupils read too much she wants learning to be made pleasant for them and an explanation to be given of anything that requires it. Again, the girls are to be taught to speak and write French simply, an art in which she herself excelled. It is interesting to find these instructions dating from such early days, for the same advice continually recurs in her letters to the mistresses at Saint-Cyr.

2) supervising  
the house-  
hold.

As at Rueil, Madame de Maintenon did not confine herself to the work of teaching or training others to teach, but entered into all the details of the management of the house.<sup>1)</sup> The finances, however, were handed over to Manseau, the King's intendant. Next to the classes, she was particularly interested in the sick-room and used to bring down medicines and prescriptions from Versailles and see that the convalescents had enough to eat, and carry them off with her to court for a change of air. Nor was the kitchen outside her sphere: "Madame de Maintenon venait à Noisy presque tous les jours, où après avoir vu l'état des classes et fait plusieurs choses pour leur avantage, elle allait à la cuisine afin de voir si

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1) cp. Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé.. ch.3.



ce qu'on apprêtait était bon et bien accommodé, ce qu'elle a toujours observé de même depuis que nous avons été à S. Cyr: car elle voulait que la nourriture fût bonne et servie avec propreté." There is no doubt either that she delighted in Noisy, from the tone in which she speaks of it to her brother. She writes one day: "C'est le lieu de délice pour moi."<sup>1)</sup> and a few days later: "Jugez de mon plaisir quand je reviens le long de l'avenue suivie de cent vingt-quatre demoiselles qui y sont présentement."<sup>2)</sup>

#### Visitors at Noisy.

By degrees Noisy came to be noticed at court,<sup>3)</sup> and the court ladies and finally the Dauphine herself begged to be allowed to see it. Madame de Maintenon gave an unwilling consent and they came and were delighted with everything. When they returned to court they talked about what they had seen and the King determined to pay his foundation a surprise visit. So one day the royal carriage drew up at the door and the King got out. The nun acting as portress, quite unmoved, left him standing at the door while she went to tell the superior. Madame de Brinon came at once, full of apologies, but Louis commended the portress for her fidelity

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1) Corr. Gén. II, p. 392.

2) Corr. Gén. II, p. 399.

3) cp. Mémoires.. de ce qui s'est passé. ch.4.

to her orders and then inspected the whole house. Everything met with his approval and he decided that he would establish a great, permanent foundation where the daughters of his nobles would be educated, just as their sons were at the Ecole des Cadets. Noisy was not suitable; it was too small and the water supply was unsatisfactory, so, in spite of Louvois' protests against the expense of the scheme, it was decided that a new school should be built at Saint-Cyr.

§ 5  
S. Cyr - choice  
of the site.

The first thing that had to be done was to choose a site. There were two such at Saint-Cyr, the castle of the Marquis of Saint-Brisson and the ancient Benedictine monastery of Notre-Dame des Anges,<sup>1)</sup> which would have been especially suitable as it could have been altered to form part of the new buildings. Madame de Maintenon, while admitting its suitability, foresaw that there would be some difficulty in persuading the Benedictines to give up their monastery even on favourable terms and she was right.<sup>2)</sup> They were terror-stricken at the very idea so, partly to relieve their fears and partly because they asked for more than

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<sup>1)</sup> Archives de la France Monastique, Vol.1, Diocèse de Chartres.

<sup>2)</sup> Corr. Gén. II, p. 396.

twice the value of their property, it was decided to abandon all thought of buying it<sup>1)</sup> and to acquire instead the castle of the Marquis of Saint Brisson, which he was quite willing to sell.

#### Buildings.

The building operations began in May, 1685. The architect was Mansard. He was considered the best man of his time and it was he who had planned Versailles, but he made several bad mistakes in the building of Saint-Cyr. First of all he had the new buildings constructed on the site of the old<sup>2)</sup> in a damp hollow when he might have put them on higher ground where it would have been healthier. Again the water supply was unsatisfactory,<sup>3)</sup> and lastly he used timber that had not been properly seasoned and all had to be replaced fifteen years later.<sup>4)</sup> Except for these mistakes, however, the house was well planned and quickly built (2,500 soldiers and labourers were employed on the work) and everything was ready by August, 1686.

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1) Lavalée. ch. 3. p.52.  
Corr. Gen. II, p. 398.

2) Ibid.

3) Lettres Hist. I, p.41.

4) Lavalée. ch. 3. p.54.

Moving into  
S. Cyr from  
Noisy.

Madame de Maintenon, naturally, had had a great deal to do with the preparations for moving into Saint-Cyr. As we shall see later she had been occupied with furnishing the house, drawing up "Constitutions" and training teachers for the new school. When the time came for the removal she sent instructions to Madame de Brisson as to how it was to be carried out in the "Ordre du depart de Noisy pour Saint-Cyr."<sup>1)</sup> This is what she plans: "Je compte donc que nous commencerons lundi 30 juillet, s'il plaît a Dieu, notre demenagement, que les rouges<sup>2)</sup> et les vertes marcheront ce jour-là, les jaunes et les bleues le mardi, l'infirmierie et les postulantes mercredi, vous et le reste de la communauté le jeudi, et tout le reste des meubles, le vendredi et le samedi que vous emploieriez à tout arranger pour préparer la bénédiction de l'église pour le dimanche." It would appear from the "Mémoires"<sup>3)</sup> that this original plan was slightly modified in the actual working out, though it was unchanged in its main features, namely that the removal was carried out in an orderly fashion and by degrees. The same

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1) Corr. Gen. III, p.33.

2) The colours of the classes had been changed by now and the reds were the youngest, then the greens, the yellows and the blues at the top of the school. cp. Corr. Gen. III, p.28.

3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé...ch.11 - where date is given as 26 July. But cp. Journal de Dangeau. "lundi, 29 août, 1686. Les demoiselles qui sont à Noisy commencèrent à en partir. Elles seront trois ou quatre jours à déménager."

"Mémoires" tell of the delight of the community on seeing their new quarters: "Si tôt que nous entrâmes dans la maison, elle nous representa l'image du paradis terrestre, où, sans que nous y eussions contribué d'aucune chose, nous trouvâmes tous les biens que l'on peut souhaiter en cette vie: une belle demeure, de beaux jardins, et une maison fournie abondamment et magnifiquement de toutes choses."<sup>1)</sup>

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§ 6  
S. Cyr -  
description  
of the house.

It is convenient to pause here for a moment to consider the material background of the education given at Saint-Cyr and to answer the questions, What were the buildings like? and How was the school financed? In doing so we shall summarise briefly any matter of interest that falls under these two headings, regardless of chronological order.

The buildings were arranged round four courts, two of which were open on one side.<sup>2)</sup> They were three storeys high and the original roof was so flat that the rain would not run off it and it had to be raised in 1698.<sup>3)</sup> On the ground floor there were the kitchens, refectories, music-rooms, and

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé. ch.11.

2) A plan is given in Lavallée.

3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé. ch.28.

Chapel.

various offices, but the two most interesting buildings were the chapel and Madame de Maintenon's own rooms. The chapel was chiefly remarkable for its simplicity;<sup>1)</sup> indeed, the bishop of Chartres thought it was too simple, but Madame de Maintenon did not agree with him. She would have no unworthy ornaments,<sup>2)</sup> such as artificial flowers, and she would have nothing that meant unnecessary expense<sup>3)</sup> or that would be at variance with the vow of poverty. God was to be honoured there by "la propreté, les lumières, le respect, le silence, la ferveur,"<sup>4)</sup> and those who wanted more outward show would find all the beauty they needed in the coloured ribbons of the various classes<sup>5)</sup> and in the music, which was remarkably fine.<sup>6)</sup> Her own apartment consisted of four small rooms on the ground floor. Originally she was meant to have the rooms above these, but she gave

M<sup>me</sup> de Main-  
tenon's rooms.

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé. ch.26.

2) Lettres hist. II. pp. 69-70.

3) Lettres hist. I, p.293.

4) cp. 3 supra.

5) Corr. Gén. III. p. 9.

6) cp. Lettre Circulaire des Soeurs de la Visitation... qui sont à présent.....à S.Cyr.

these up to be near the sick-room and took the smaller ones below. When she retired to Saint-Cyr she was glad her rooms were on the ground floor as she was able then to join in the recreations of the nuns, either in the court or in the common room<sup>1)</sup> and to go to the chapel, though even this she found a long way when she was old.<sup>2)</sup>

#### Classrooms.

The classrooms were on the first floor, the "blue" one being over the kitchens, the "yellow" over the refectory, the "green" over the nuns' common room and refectory and the "red" over the music rooms. They were papered in the colour of the class, with ornaments and hangings to match. At first there were only two long tables in each,<sup>3)</sup> but after teaching there herself for some time Madame de Maintenon decided that it would be easier to have the girls in groups of nine or ten, working at separate tables.<sup>4)</sup> On this floor were also the linen rooms,<sup>5)</sup> well stocked - for the

#### Store-rooms.

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1) Haussanville III. Introd. II. p. xlix "L'appartement de M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon à S. Cyr", where there is also a description of her furniture.

2) Ibid. p. 11. Lettre du 25 sept.; 1715.

3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé... ch. 10.

4) Ibid., ch. 26.

5) Ibid., ch. 4.

King had himself said that there were to be three, not two pairs of sheets to each bed - where the linen was piled in dozens, each dozen being tied with a cherry-coloured ribbon<sup>1)</sup> and the store-rooms for the dresses, which were equally gay, for all the dresses were folded so as to show the ribbons on the outside, which, we are told, made such a brave show you would have thought you were at the fair.

#### Dormitories.

Each class had its dormitory over its class-room. To quote again from the Memoires:<sup>2)</sup> "On voyait d'un bout à l'autre des lits tres-bien rangés, de la couleur de la classe, et les rideaux attachés par le pied avec un ruban de soie de la même couleur; des couvertures de laine blanche, toutes neuves; cela, dans un lieu où les murs et le reste du bâtiment venaient d'être faits, donnaient un air de propreté et de beauté qui faisait plaisir à voir". On this floor, too, there was the nuns' dormitory, where each had her cell, furnished simply but with everything she needed, even to books of devotion on the table and clothing in the chest of drawers. It is to be feared, however, that all did not

#### Cells.

<sup>1)</sup> Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé ch. 10.

<sup>2)</sup> Ibid., ch.10.



appreciate order and beauty to the same extent as Madame du Perou, the author of the *Mémoires*, for Madame de Maintenon had to warn them to tidy everything up as visitors were coming, one of whom was "La Grande Mademoiselle", who would go everywhere.<sup>1)</sup>

#### Grounds.

The gardens were also laid out by Mansard. Madame de Brinon had been anxious to have a kind of home farm,<sup>2)</sup> but this was not allowed, and there was not even a kitchen garden, though there were large grounds and plenty of fruit trees.<sup>3)</sup> The various paths, shrubberies and summer-houses were all named by the King and, as the girls did not go outside the grounds from the time they entered Saint-Cyr, between the ages of seven and twelve, until they finally left at the age of twenty,<sup>4)</sup> the garden formed a most important part of the establishment. At the extreme south-east corner there was a little isolated hospital for infectious illnesses, too often full of cases of smallpox, and with a chapel of its own. After the reform the priests of Saint Lazare, who were to be the confessors of the

Hospital of  
S. Roch.

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1) Corr. Gén. III, p. 39-40.

2) Geffroy. I, p.173 (à Mme de Brinon, mai, 1686 ? ).

3) *Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé...* ch. 25.

4) Except by very rare and special permission. Cp. *Lettres...sur l'Educ<sup>n</sup>* I. p.312-316.

community, were given quarters in a building on the west side of the Cour du Dehors<sup>1)</sup> and eventually they were given a garden at Fontenay.

Finances of  
S. Cyr.

The revenues of Saint-Cyr<sup>2)</sup> naturally increased in time. The annual expenditure was at first estimated at 150,000 livres and its main endowments were:

1,600 livres from the Saint-Cyr property.

50,000 livres from the income on various lands,  
and

114,000 livres from the suppression of the  
"manse abbatiale" of Saint-Denis and the  
appropriation of its income to the new  
foundation of Saint-Cyr.

Later on the expenses became heavier and the King added 90,000 livres taken from the taxes of Paris, 60,000 of which was to be used exclusively for the girls' dowries on going out into the world. By 1790 their income was reckoned at 496,406 livres and their expenditure at 440,365. From the educational point of view the chief thing to notice about these figures is that, thanks to their endowment, the Ladies of Saint-Louis were entirely free from financial worries. In this they had a great advantage over all other communities, including those founded on the model of Saint-Cyr.<sup>3)</sup> In ordinary times there was no need for them to stint and save,

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé.. ch. 28, 29.

2) Cp. Lavallee. ch.3 p.57. cp.appendices 8 & 9.

3) Lettres....sur l'educ<sup>n</sup>. p.317.

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though naturally there was to be no waste<sup>1)</sup>, and the more they saved the more would they be able to spend in providing for the needs of their girls, both at school and on leaving it: this was to be their first obligation in almsgiving. In times of want, such as the famine of 1709, their first care was again to provide for their girls, and Madame de Maintenon is insistent that they are to economise on themselves<sup>2)</sup> and not on their charges. Above all they had no need to seek favour with any rich or important people:<sup>3)</sup> they were absolutely forbidden to receive any gifts except from Madame de Maintenon, and her anger when they, innocently enough it would appear, asked for and got the wood which had been used for the platform in some ceremony, showed how serious this prohibition was.<sup>4)</sup> They were thus able always to be disinterested and should have been preserved from the snare into which so many other communities fell.

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- 1) Lettres hist. I, p. 72.  
 2) Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 145-152.  
 3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé...ch.27.  
 4) Lettres...sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p.135. L'Esprit de l'Institut..." § 6. Du désintéressement.
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97  
 Preparations  
 for the new  
 establishment.

While Saint-Cyr was being built and arrangements made for

1) Aim -  
 to provide  
 a secular  
 educ<sup>n</sup> for  
 girls.

its endowment, other preparations were also on foot for the formation of the new establishment. The King took an interest in all of these and both made suggestions and plans himself and criticised or approved those that were submitted to him. He was quite clear as to what the aim of the new community was to be: he had no wish to form a new order;<sup>1)</sup> he considered that there were plenty of convents already in France and he wished Saint-Cyr to be "ni un couvent, ni rien qui le sentit, soit par les pratiques extérieures, soit par l'habit, soit par les nombreux offices, soit par la vie, qui devait, selon lui, être active mais aisée et commode sans austerités; il voulait seulement une communauté de filles pieuses et sensées, capables d'élever les demoiselles dans la crainte de Dieu et de leur donner l'instruction convenable à leur sexe, à quoi elles s'engageraient par des vœux simples de pauvreté, de chasteté, d'obéissance, et par un quatrième d'élever et d'instruire les demoiselles."<sup>2)</sup> These "simple vows" were only binding for a certain number of years, and not for life. Madame de Maintenon, too, had a poor opinion of the average nun<sup>3)</sup> and wished Saint-Cyr to avoid all the

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1) cp. Mémoires de Louis XIV.

2) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé....ch. 7.

3) MSS de Mouchy I, p. 188. Quoted, Geffroy, Introd. p. 29. "M<sup>e</sup> de Beuvron paraît une bonne fille: peu d'esprit, peu de piété...enfin une vraie religieuse comme elles sont d'ordinaire, c'est à dire, sans éducation, sans maxime, sans droiture et sans dévotion solide."

"miseres et petites" <sup>1)</sup> of the convent: Saint-Cyr was to have only one aim, the education of girls <sup>2)</sup> - an aim which, if rightly understood, would occupy all the life of those who set it before them. Nevertheless she saw the dangers that threatened the new form of community <sup>3)</sup> and from the first she would have liked the nuns to be bound by solemn vows, so as to have them attached permanently to the work of education. Still, she gave way to the king, and it was decided that the nuns should only take simple vows, that they should be addressed as "Madame" and not as "Ma mère", and their dress, instead of being the regular religious habit, should be such as was worn in the world, but uniform, simple and modest <sup>4)</sup>

2) Constitutions.

Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Brinon were meanwhile at work drawing up "Constitutions" <sup>5)</sup> These laid down that

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1) Corr. Gén. II p. 424..

2) " " p.417.

3) Lettres....sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. 1. p. 31. "Nous avons tant voulu ôter les manières de couvent que nous ferions à la fin une maison particulière dont on se trouverait mal dans la suite".

4) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé, ch. 7 & 8.

5) The Constitutions and preceding letter are published in full by Rosmorduc - Preuves de noblesse des demoiselles bretonnes admises .. à S.Cyr, and summarized in Lavallée, ch.3.

the establishment was to consist of two hundred and fifty girls, of noble family but poor. To be admitted they had to be able to prove four generations of nobility on their father's side and produce a certificate of poverty from their bishop. They would be admitted between the ages of seven and twelve and kept till they were twenty without any fees<sup>1)</sup> and given a dowry when they left. There were to be thirty-six nuns or "Ladies" and twenty-four lay sisters to do the housework: the nuns were to be recruited as far as possible from the girls of the school. The Constitutions also mention how the school was endowed and forbid the nuns to receive any gifts except from Madame de Maintenon, to whom were to be paid all the honours due to a founder and who was appointed the spiritual superior of the community.

When the Constitutions were ready they were shown to the Bishop of Chartres, in whose diocese Saint-Cyr lay; to the abbe Gobelin, who was to be the ecclesiastical superior of the house, and to the Père La Chaise, the king's confessor.<sup>2)</sup> They were then shown to Racine and Boileau, who were to correct them from the point of view of style, and they were

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1) Unless their parents wished to withdraw them to marry them.

2) Corr. Gén. III, pp. 20, 29.

finally approved by the Pope. Thus in June, 1686, the community was founded by letters patent, which end thus:-  
 Letters patent of foundation. "Sçavoir faisons que pour ces causes, de notre propre mouvement, pleine puissance et autorité royale, nous avons fondé, érigé et establi, fondons érigeons et établissons à perpétuité par ces presentes, signées de notre main, en ladite maison de St.Cyr, une communauté qui sera composée de trente-six dames professes, deux-cens-cinquante demoiselles d'extraction noble, et vingt-quatre soeurs converses, pour y estre receues ainsy qu'il sera expliqué cy après, et vivre suivant les règles et constitutions qui leur seront données par notre amé et feal conseiller d'Estat ordinaire, le sieur evesque de Chartres, dans le dioceze et sous l'autorite duquel et de ses successeurs sera et demeurera ladite maison pour ce qui depend de la visite, correction et jurisdiction episcopale."

3) Training of the teachers. 1st noviciate. The buildings of Saint-Cyr were begun in May, 1685. In October of the same year Madame de Maintenon chose out from among the eldest girls at Noisy those who were likely to make the best Ladies of Saint Louis, and by the addition of a few outsiders brought their numbers up to twelve.<sup>1)</sup> These

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1) Corr. Gen. III. p.5. "Je compte que nous ferons d'abord douze professes."

spent the next nine months as novices, training for their new work. It was not an ordinary noviciate, for, besides being prepared to take their vows, they had to be trained to teach and taught how to do the other work that would fall to them, such as nursing<sup>1)</sup> or looking after their house and affairs<sup>2)</sup>. This is what Madame de Maintenon wrote of her scheme to the abbé Gobelin in October, 1685: "J'approuve comme vous que les filles fassent un an d'épreuve; mais il me semble qu'il serait bien plus utile si au lieu de les enfermer dans le noviciat à s'instruire de leur règle et à ne savoir leurs obligations qu'en spéculation, elles passaient cette année en fonction des charges qu'elles auront, et surtout dans le gouvernement et l'instruction des enfants, qui est le fondement de leur institut. Je sais bien qu'il ne faudrait pas aussi les y assujettir si entièrement qu'elles n'eussent le temps des prières, oraisons, silence, actes et conférences; mais on pourrait faire un mélange qui ferait connaître et aux autres et à elles-mêmes de quoi elles sont capables."<sup>3)</sup> This letter makes it clear that Madame de Maintenon never intended the novices to be merely or mainly

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1) Sisters of Charity were called in to show them how to nurse, cp. Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p.25.

2) M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon's confidential servant, Mademoiselle Balbien or "Nanon" trained them to look after the house.

3) For training in keeping records etc. cp. Corr. Gén. III, p.5.  
Corr. Gén. II, p. 423.



concerned with learning to teach, but it is possible that in actual practice this side was the one emphasized: this at least was the impression left on the minds of the Visitation who came to direct the second noviciate. They say that at this time the novices "n'avaient presque point d'autres exercices que ceux des classes, toute leur application était d'étudier et d'apprendre beaucoup de choses par coeur, de copier des livres pour les mieux retenir, de composer des discours de piété, etc."<sup>1)</sup> Thus a good deal of their time during the noviciate was occupied with their training as teachers, but in addition to that they had two instructions a day from Madame de Brinon and two every week from the abbé Gobelin - in which he was particularly asked to preach humility to them - besides various other practices of piety, so that the "spiritual" side of their training was not forgotten. They were admitted to take their vows by July of the following year and thus formed the nucleus of the new community. Madame de Brinon had been elected, exceptionally, superior for life, but these ex-novices, young as they were, filled the other offices of the house,

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1) Lettre circulaire des Soeurs de la Visitation S<sup>te</sup> Marie qui sont à présent en la Maison Royale de S. Louis à S. Cyr.

2) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé... ch. 7.

such as assistant, novice mistress and treasurer, or mistresses of the four classes.<sup>1)</sup>

Applications  
for admission  
received.

As soon as the plan of Saint-Cyr had been published the King had received numerous applications for admission.

These were all examined to see that the proofs of nobility and poverty were in order, and then the girls to whom places were granted were brought to be inspected by Madame d'Hozier, for no one was admitted who had any noticeable physical defect. The successful candidates were lodged in a house in Paris till things were ready for them, and in August, 1686, the whole community moved into Saint-Cyr, as has been already described.

§8.  
Education at  
S. Cyr before  
the Reform.

The girls were divided into four classes and were given a uniform trimmed with the colour of their class, as at Noisy.

1) List of 1st. office-bearers. (Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé...ch. 9.)

Assistante.	M <sup>e</sup> de Loubert.
Maîtresse des novices.	M <sup>e</sup> de Pérou.
Dépositaire.	M <sup>e</sup> de Radouay.
Sacristine.	M <sup>e</sup> de Rocquemont.
Infirmière.	M <sup>e</sup> de Gautier.
Dépensière.	M <sup>e</sup> de Thuméry.
Maîtresses des classes.	M <sup>es</sup> . de Fontaines, d'Hauzy, de St. Aubin, de St. Pars.

The "prefects" ("Noires" and "Couleur de feu"). Twenty girls were chosen from the two senior classes,<sup>1)</sup> the blues and the yellows. These wore a black ribbon and helped in the classes or anywhere else where they were needed in the house. This institution of the "Blacks" is a characteristic and important feature of the organisation of Saint-Cyr and we shall come back to it later on. It is really the beginning of a system of prefects or monitors, and it is interesting to notice that it existed from the earliest days at Saint-Cyr. Besides the Blacks, there were eight or ten others singled out from the senior classes. They wore a flame-coloured ribbon and helped in much the same way as the Blacks, except that they were only sent to the junior classes. Another characteristic institution each with its own monitors. also dating from this time was the division of each class into "bands" or "families" of eight or ten each. Over each band there were set the three most responsible people in it, as "head", "assistant" and "deputy", who looked after the books and papers, heard the others their lessons, helped them with their sewing. This system was useful especially from two points of view: it set the mistresses free for the important part of their work and it provided

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 11. "Ordre des Classes, 1686" is mainly concerned with the choice and duties of these monitors.

. an excellent training for the girls.

Syllabus.

The actual syllabus of instruction would not be counted a broad one to-day, but it was well in advance of the time. Madame de Maintenon wanted the girls to be taught to think for themselves,<sup>1)</sup> to read widely, to cultivate style in writing and to know such things as would prepare them to take their place in the society of cultured people. The youngest girls learned reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, Catechism and Scripture;<sup>2)</sup> the next class added to this music and a little history, geography and mythology. The "Yellows" concentrated on their own language, together with religious instruction, music and dancing, whilst the senior class, - of whom about a third were "Blacks" and so had no fixed lessons - devoted their attention to moral education, French and music. In addition to this, everyone was taught sewing and all kinds of housework, especially in the senior classes, where they helped to dress and undress the little ones, fold the linen, wait at table, sweep and dust and help in the various duties of the house.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) cp. La Beaumelle. Mémoires de M<sup>e</sup> de Maintenon.  
Livre VII. ch. 14.

cp. Corr. Gén. III, p. 10.

2) Lavallée. ch. 8. p. 164.

3) Corr. Gén. III, p. 42.

## Time-table.

The way in which the girls spent their time is thus described by La Beaumelle, who says: "Les demoiselles se lèvent à six heures, entendent la messe à huit, déjeunent à neuf, dînent à onze heures, lisent tour à tour pendant le repas, se récréent jusqu'à une heure, travaillent jusqu'à six heures, que toute la communauté va souper, et ne peuvent aller au parloir que quinze jours à la fin de chaque quartier... Elles sont instruites avec douceur, distribuées en différentes classes, subdivisées en brigades. L'honneur, le plaisir d'avoir bien fait, marqué par un ruban qui distingue les plus sages, est leur récompense: la honte presque l'unique châtiment."<sup>1)</sup>

## § 9

"Esther".  
Monotony of  
school life  
broken by  
visits from  
court.

Such in brief outline was the education given at Saint-Cyr before the reform. One day would tend to be very much like another, and yet life there was probably less monotonous than that at any other boarding school where there were no holidays. To begin with, at least, there were constant interruptions in the form of visitors from court,<sup>2)</sup> for Saint-Cyr was in fashion,

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<sup>1)</sup> La Beaumelle, op. cit., Livre VII. ch. 14.  
But Lavallée, ch. 8, p. 164. says they rose at 6;  
heard Mass at 8, worked till 12; dinner and recreation till  
2; classes till 6 and bed at 9.

<sup>2)</sup> Corr. Gén. III, p. 73.

it was conveniently near; the daughters of ancient families were being brought up there; and, as the King and Madame de Maintenon made no secret of their interest in it, it was only natural that the courtiers should at least appear to be interested in it too. There was one great day, in September, 1686,<sup>1)</sup> when the King, accompanied by Madame de Maintenon and some other ladies of the court, came and processed to the chapel, where the Te Deum was sung. He then went over the house and as he came into the garden everyone began to sing "Grand Dieu, sauvez le roi," which, according to Saint-Cyr tradition, was composed by Lulli for this occasion. But the school reached the height of its fame and favour at court about two years later, when the girls played "Esther" before an audience composed of the greatest people in the land.

Theatricals  
before Esther.

Acting was no innovation in education.<sup>2)</sup> Schools had often produced plays, those of the Jesuits being particularly famous for theirs. From the early days at Rueil Madame de Brinon had written tragedies for the girls to act, and though

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<sup>1)</sup> Lavallée. ch. 3. p. 75.

<sup>2)</sup> For the whole story of the plays cp. Taphanel. Le théâtre de S.Cyr.

M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon's  
reasons for  
encouraging  
them.

Madame de Maintenon knew they were bad and told her so, she did not put a stop to the acting, but she tried to find them better plays. "J'ai cru qu'il était raisonnable et nécessaire de divertir les enfants", she wrote to Madame du Pérou in 1701, "et je l'ai vu pratiquer dans tous les lieux où l'on en a rassemblé; mais j'ai voulu en divertissant celles de Saint-Cyr remplir leur esprit de belles choses dont elles ne seront point honteuses dans le monde, leur apprendre à prononcer, les occuper pour les retirer de la conversation qu'elles ont entre elles, et amuser surtout les grandes qui, depuis quinze jusqu'à vingt ans, s'ennuient un peu de la vie de Saint-Cyr."<sup>1)</sup> Her difficulty was to find a suitable play. She tried Cinna, Andromaque, Iphigénie, Alexandre, but after Andromaque she wrote to Racine: "Nos petites filles viennent de jouer Andromaque, et l'ont si bien jouée qu'elles ne la joueront plus, ni aucune de vos pièces."<sup>2)</sup> She therefore asked Racine to write something specially for them. He hesitated, unwilling either to risk his dramatic reputation by writing a schoolgirls' play or to offend Madame de Maintenon. At last he thought of the story of Esther, which was both eminently suitable for his purpose and also

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres...sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> I, p. 320.

<sup>2)</sup> Fragment preserved in Souvenirs de M<sup>me</sup> de Caylus, p. 142.

appealed to him because of the opportunity it afforded for using a chorus in the Greek fashion.<sup>1)</sup> He therefore set to work and the play "Esther" was the result.

Esther. The rehearsals of the first scenes began before the last 1) actresses were written. The actresses<sup>2)</sup> were chosen not, as one would expect, from the eldest girls, but from the "Yellow" class, and most of them were not more than fifteen years old. The one whose name was the most famous afterwards was Madame de Caylus, niece of Madame de Maintenon "à la mode de Bretagne" and author of the Souvenirs. She was entrusted with the Prologue in the first performances, but as she knew the whole play by heart she used afterwards to take the part of anyone who was ill. There was also Mademoiselle de Glapion, "un Mardochée dont la voix va jusqu'au coeur", who later became superior, and the intimate friend of Madame de Maintenon.

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1) cp. Preface to Esther.

2) The names of the girls taking part in these performances were:-

Mlle. du Pont de Veilhan.	Esther.
" de Lastic.	Assuérus.
" de la Maisonfort.	Elise.
" de Glapion.	Mardochée.
" d'Abancourt.	Aman.
" de Marsilly.	Zarès.
" de Mornay.	Hydaspe.
M <sup>me</sup> de Caylus.	La Piété
	(Prologue)



2) music

3) dresses

4) theatre

Elise was played by Mademoiselle de la Maisonfort, sister of the protagonist of Quietism and famous for having had her tears dried by Racine, after having forgotten her part. The music for the choruses was composed by Moreau, and Nivers played the accompaniments on the clavecin, while an orchestra was provided by the court musicians. Madame de Maintenon saw to the dresses. She had magnificent Persian robes made, trimmed with the jewels taken from the fancy dresses the King had once worn in his theatricals. Finally a theatre was built on the second floor of the house, in the wide dormitory corridor at the top of the girls' staircase. A platform was raised at the north end, with an entrance from one of the dormitories which acted as the green room. Seats were put for the nuns in the very front: at the back staging of different heights was built for the girls, who had their places there, the Reds at the top and the Blues at the bottom. The space between the two was used for the guests and there the King had his seat a little way in front of everyone else.

5) performances. The first public performance was given on January 26th, 1689.<sup>1)</sup> The king arrived about two o'clock, and, as it was the first time, brought only a few people with him. He took his place with Madame de Maintenon beside, though slightly behind, him, and the play began. It had a tremendous success. The king was delighted with it and so many people wanted to see it that five more performances of it were given that year. James II of England was present at one of these, but it was noticed that, though Louis shewed and explained everything to him, "il paraissait insensible à tout."<sup>2)</sup> Another guest, of a much more appreciative nature, was Madame de Sévigné,<sup>3)</sup> who was invited to the last performance given that year, though it was played again seven times in 1690.

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1) cp. Dangeau. Journal II, p.311. Jan.26th.1689.

2) Lavallée. ch. 4, p. 95.

3) cp. Lettres de M<sup>me</sup> de Sévigné. 21 février 1689.

Athalie.

Racine was by now at work on "Athalie", but when it was finished it was never performed with the same magnificence as Esther. Some priests had criticised severely the production of "Esther"<sup>1)</sup> and Madame de Maintenon had wished it only to be acted in private even in the early days. When Godet des Marais, bishop of Chartres, also joined in disapproving of the public performances of the plays they were stopped and Athalie was acted by the girls in their ordinary clothes in one of the classrooms.<sup>2)</sup> Thenceforward,

Plays stopped, though theatricals were not banished from the school - for the Conversations of Madame de Maintenon were acted and girls would sometimes be taken to Versailles to act before the king in Madame de Maintenon's room - their first splendour was gone, for a great change was about to be made in the education of Saint-Cyr.

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1) Corr. Gén. III, p. 170.

2) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé..ch. 18.

## § 10

The Reform.  
 M<sup>me</sup> de Brinon  
 dismissed.

The first sign of this change had been given in December 1688, before "Esther" had ever been acted in public. Madame de Maintenon had been growing more and more dissatisfied with Madame de Brinon, who, as will be remembered, had been appointed superior for life, as all the other nuns were so young. But as time went on Madame de Brinon's pride and ideas of grandeur made her increasingly difficult to work with, and set a bad example to the whole community. "Nos dames sont un peu tourmentées ici, entre elle et moi; elle ne peuvent être gouvernées par deux personnes qui pensent si différemment."<sup>1)</sup> This was what Madame de Maintenon wrote in October 1688, but even two years earlier, during the noviciate, when the Constitutions of Saint-Cyr were being drawn up, it became clear that her conception of what work the novices should, or should not, do, was far removed from Madame de Maintenon's, and was likely to inspire them with dangerous ideas of their own importance.<sup>2)</sup> The abbé Gobelin was sent to remonstrate with her, and she was deprived of some of her authority,<sup>3)</sup> but to no purpose. So on December 10th. 1688 she received a "lettre de cachet" with orders to

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<sup>1)</sup> Corr. Gén. III, p.121.

<sup>2)</sup> Ibid III, p. 7, 8.

<sup>3)</sup> Lavallée. ch. 5. p.106.

leave Saint-Cyr at once, to resign her position and to retire to some convent. She could do nothing but obey, and Saint-Cyr was thus finally rid of her.<sup>1)</sup> After her departure one of the young nuns, Madame de Loubert, acted as superior, though the real government, of course, was in the hands of Madame de Maintenon, and between them the school was carried on through the years of Esther and Athalie.

It was easier to free Saint-Cyr of the presence of Madame de Brinon than of the spirit of pride which she had encouraged there.<sup>2)</sup> "Dans ce temps-là les jeunes Demoiselles étaient pleines de hauteur, et paraissaient enflées de l'honneur de la protection du Roi," reported the nuns of the Visitation, "l'application qu'on avait eu (sic) à former leur esprit, l'éloignement qu'elles avaient pour ce que le monde appelle petitesse des Couvents, la proximité et le commerce avec plusieurs personnes de la Cour et surtout la liberté que Madame de Maintenon leur donnait de l'approcher familièrement...tout cela avait élevé leurs coeurs".

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1) She retired finally to the abbey of Maubuisson, and M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon wrote to her regularly until M<sup>me</sup> de Brinon died in 1701.

2) Rapport par les Soeurs de la Visitation Ste. Marie qui sont a present en la Maison Royale de St. Louis à St. Cyr.

Godet des Merais, the new Bishop of Chartres,<sup>1)</sup> who had been called in, in 1689, to give spiritual direction to the nuns, had seen the danger and had warned Madame de Maintenon. It was on his advice that the plays were stopped, but Madame de Maintenon was not content with this: she had wanted the girls to be educated not only "chrétienement"<sup>2)</sup> but also "raisonnablement et noblement", but the results of the experiment had seemed to show that the latter part of this aim could only be achieved by sacrificing the more important qualities. No compromise would satisfy her: she saw the evil: she was quite ready to admit her share in the responsibility for it - "j'y ai contribué plus que personne",<sup>3)</sup> she writes - and she intended at all costs to root it out.

2) Change in the type of educ.<sup>n</sup>

No one would deny that Madame de Maintenon went too far in her reaction against the broad and secular type of education she had first established. The only books the girls were now allowed were books of devotion, and they were encouraged to sew rather than to read whenever possible.<sup>4)</sup> Their

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé.. ch. 18.

2) Languet de Gergy. Mémoires inédits. I, p. 382.  
(quoted Lavalley, ch. 4. p. 81.)

3) Lettres ... sur l'educ<sup>n</sup> p. 64.

4) ibid. p. 225.

lessons were to be of the simplest: there were to be no more questions,<sup>1)</sup> no searchings after literary style, and a bare minimum of actual instruction. Instead, they were to be given plenty of domestic work to do, and to do in silence.<sup>2)</sup> Even in matters of dress their vanity was to be combated, and they had to patch their dresses when they were torn,<sup>3)</sup> and their allowance of ribbon was cut down by two thirds.<sup>4)</sup>

"Nos filles ont été trop considérées, trop caressées, trop ménagées ... Demandons instantment à Notre Seigneur qu'il change le fond de nos cœurs, qu'il ôte de votre maison cet esprit d'élévation, de raillerie, de subtilité, de curiosité, de liberté de juger et de dire son avis sur tout ... qu'il ôte cette délicatesse, cette impatience des moindres inconvénients: le silence et l'humilité en seront les meilleurs moyens."<sup>5)</sup> So for about four years Madame de Maintenon persevered in the fervour of reform, before she arrived at a position half way between ordinary conventual education, which did not foster pride, even if it did not

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 206.  
cp. Lettres hist. I, p.36.

2) Lettres hist. I, p. 294.

3) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 175.

4) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé ... ch. 13.

5) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 64 - 68.

encourage much learning, and that of the Salons, where both one and the other flourished.

3) Priests of the Mission became the confessors of the community.

Another stage in the reform, though one which had little influence on the education of Saint-Cyr, was reached in August 1691,<sup>1)</sup> when six priests, belonging to the Mission founded by Saint Vincent de Paul, were asked to come and live at Saint-Cyr, and act as chaplains and confessors. A house was built for them on the west side of the Cours du Dehors, near the Chapel, and thenceforward their superior was to be ecclesiastical superior of Saint-Cyr, under the bishop of Chartres.

4) Nuns take solemn vows.

One thing still remained to be done before the reform was complete. Saint-Cyr was not yet a regular community belonging to any order, and the nuns had only taken simple vows. In founding it, Louis XIV. had said most emphatically that it was not to be a convent, and as usual he had his own way. But various circumstances now combined to lead him to reconsider his decision:<sup>2)</sup> for example the Pope was unwilling to allow the transference of the revenue of Saint-Denis to Saint-Cyr, so long as the latter was a secular foundation,

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé .. ch. 19.

2) cp. Lavallée. ch. 6. p. 125.



and the new bishop of Chartres was all in favour of the change.<sup>1)</sup> The king, therefore, gave his consent at last, only stipulating that the uniform of the nuns should remain unchanged, and it was decided that Saint-Cyr should become a convent of the order of Saint Augustine, and that the nuns should enter upon a second noviciate in preparation for taking their solemn vows.

2nd noviciate. This second noviciate is described both by the author of the "Mémoires", who was one of the novices,<sup>2)</sup> and by the Visitandines who were called in to conduct it. They tell of Madame de Maintenon's deliberations as to how it should be done, and her decision to ask for the help of the nuns of the Visitation at Chaillot, who at length consented to come. Three of them, and a companion, arrived at the end of November 1692. The Ladies of Saint-Louis had already agreed, though sorrowfully, to enter upon this second period of testing and preparation, which began on December 1st. On that day there was a ceremony in the chapel when all those who had

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1) Mme de Maintenon of course had always wished for solemn vows, both to attach the nuns to the school more permanently, and to provide for it after her death by enlisting the support of the clergy.

2) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé .. ch. 22.  
Rapport par les Soeurs de la Visitation ...

been nuns, including the ex-superior and novice mistress and form mistresses, laid aside their outer cloaks and veils and golden crucifixes, and became novices again. Their training was of the usual type: they were specially exercised in the virtues of obedience,<sup>1)</sup> humility and patience, and they were given much hard work to do. Twice a day they listened to instructions on their Rule, and after six months they were "apprenticed" to the various positions in the house, both as training for themselves and to see how the new Constitutions worked. The first nuns were ready to take their vows by December 1693, and the others soon after, but Mere Marie Constance of the Visitation still remained as novice mistress for several years more.

#### Revision of the Constitutions.

During the year of the noviciate the Constitutions were revised. The novices were allowed to see and discuss these before being asked definitely to accept them, for it was thought that they would abide more loyally by something

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<sup>1)</sup> cp. Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé ... ch. 22.  
 "Dans les temps où elle (i.e. une des religieuses de la Visitation) voyait qu'on était le plus pressé ou qu'on s'attachait à quelque occupation elle venait nous dire: Ma soeur, je vous prie de me faire lire, ou écrire, ou jeter, etc. Il fallait tout quitter pour cela, sans donner la moindre marque de volonté contraire ni de répugnance."

which they had helped to make. These Constitutions were mainly concerned<sup>1)</sup> with such questions as the size of the community, the age of admission, the length of the noviciate, the duties and the methods of election of the various officers, and the composition and authority of the Councils, both of internal and external affairs. They were followed by the Regulations, which explained each article more fully, and Madame de Maintenon also persuaded<sup>2)</sup> the Bishop of Chartres to write the "Spirit of the Institute of the Daughters of Saint Louis", which was to precede the Constitutions. Finally,<sup>3)</sup> there was made the book of Usages, a kind of minute book, saying what had been done in various circumstances in the past, so that they might be dealt with in the same way should they arise in the future. After that Madame de Maintenon was able to write:<sup>4)</sup> "Il ne vous manque plus rien pour votre instruction et votre sanctification. Faites donc de l'Evangile, de votre règle,

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1) Lavallée. ch. 7. p. 144.

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 111.  
"L'Esprit de l'Institut" p. 135 - 161.

3) Lettres hist. II, p. 78.

4) Lettres édifiantes V. p. 682 (recueil fait par  
Languet de Gergy. cité Lavallée. ch. 6, p. 138.

de vos constitutions, de vos règlements, de votre cérémonial, de vos usages, et des conseils qui vous ont été donnés, comme un rempart qui vous défende à jamais de l'esprit du monde, de toute nouveauté, et de toute doctrine étrangère."

The change was now complete, but it had been made once and for all.

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# § 11 Quietism at S. Cyr.

It has been said that the only outstanding events in the history of Saint-Cyr were the plays, the reform, and the troubles that arose over Quietism. We have just been dealing with the first two of these events, and it is time now to pass on to the third.<sup>1)</sup> Quietism, that "doctrine which declares that man's highest perfection consists in a sort of psychical self-annihilation and a consequent absorption of the soul into the Divine essence even during the present life"<sup>2)</sup> did not, of course, originate with Madame Guyon at Saint-Cyr, but with Molinos earlier in the century.

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1) For a full discussion of Quietism cp:-  
Fénelon. Explic<sup>n</sup> des Maximes des Saints.  
Phélipiaux. Relation de l'origine et des  
développements du Quiétisme.  
Brunetière. La querelle du quiétisme.  
Sainte-Beuve. M<sup>me</sup> Guyon.  
Guerrier. M<sup>me</sup> Guyon.

2) Cath. Encyc. art. Quietism. Caxton Publishing  
Company, 1910.

It owed its introduction into Saint-Cyr to Madame de la Maisonfort, "la plus aimable sainte qui soit au monde", who had come to teach at Noisy and thence went on to Saint-Cyr.<sup>1)</sup> She had a gift for teaching, and was a great favourite with Madame de Maintenon, although she had a tormenting, over-scrupulous conscience, a good deal of pride, and no real religious vocation. Madame Guyon, who had been confined in a convent on the orders of the archbishop of Paris for spreading Molinos' heretical doctrine in France, was a relation of hers, and it was Madame de la Maisonfort who persuaded Madame de Maintenon to let her come to Saint-Cyr on her liberation. The result was that Quietism soon spread through the whole community, until the Bishop of Chartres became alarmed, and warned Madame de Maintenon, who sent Madame Guyon away. The Bishop then asked that the nuns should give up all her writings, and inspected their library to rid it of any suspect books, and it was hoped that the trouble was at an end.

These hopes, however, were not to be fulfilled. Outside Saint-Cyr the whole question was debated at the conferences

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<sup>1)</sup> Corr. Gén. III, p. 276.

of Issy in 1694, where Madame Guyon's doctrine was condemned by the entire assembly which included Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Noailles and Fenelon - who signed the condemnation "non par persuasion mais par déférence".<sup>1)</sup> Madame Guyon's disgrace was therefore complete, but the interest in her teaching was re-kindled by Fenelon's publication of the "Maximes des Saints" soon after he had been consecrated Bishop of Cambrai. At Saint-Cyr, quietism had never really died out. In spite of all the measures taken by the Bishop of Chartres and Madame de Maintenon, some of the nuns still held to the doctrine of Madame Guyon and even kept some of her writings. . All the books in the house were therefore inspected for a second time, and, on Madame de Maintenon's invitation, Bossuet came down to give a series of lectures to the nuns on the dangers of the heresy, and to answer their questions and explain their difficulties. He was then engaged in a bitter controversy with Fenelon over the "Maximes des Saints". All the nuns except three were convinced by Bossuet's teaching and renounced the errors of Quietism; the three who stood out, Mesdames de la Maisonfort, du Tourp, and de Montaigle, received "lettres de cachet" in May 1697, with orders to leave Saint-Cyr at once, and never to come back to it. For the king's

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<sup>1)</sup> cp. Lavallée. ch. 9. p. 192.

interest in the quarrel had been awakened, and he was determined that Saint-Cyr was not to be for the Quietists what Port-Royal had been for the Jansenists. He was exceedingly angry about Fénelon's share in the trouble, and Fenelon was completely disgraced when his book was condemned at Rome in 1699. Both Madame de Maintenon and the king abandoned him, and he withdrew from all other business to live quietly in his diocese of Cambrai.

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§12  
Life at  
S. Cyr  
after the  
Reform.

Thus ended the incident of Quietism, so far as Saint-Cyr was concerned. Thereafter there was nothing to disturb the peace of the community until the death of Madame de Maintenon, beyond faint echoes of the wars and famines in the world outside. By the end of the seventeenth century, the school had settled down into its final form, and it is this final form that we must now consider briefly before going on to the history of the last years of Saint-Cyr.

#### A. The nuns.

The reform had made no change in the numbers of the nuns or of the girls; the foundation still consisted of forty nuns, including novices, twenty-eight lay sisters and two hundred and fifty girls. The nuns were recruited from the girls, as far as possible: girls who showed promise of being useful to

How re-  
cruited.

Qualifica-  
tions and  
training.

the community were encouraged to stay,<sup>1)</sup> and places were always given to them rather than to outsiders, whom Madame de Maintenon did not wish to admit at all unless they were exceptionally suitable.<sup>2)</sup> As the aim of the community was education, no one who had a real dislike of teaching or children was a suitable candidate for admission,<sup>3)</sup> but, beyond this, no special qualifications were demanded: "il leur faut de la santé, de l'esprit et quelques talents, s'il est possible; mais la vertu et la véritable vocation sont préférables à tout."<sup>4)</sup> Once admitted, they received a certain amount of training in teaching during their noviciate. After their profession, too, they had opportunities of learning from Madame de Maintenon, who both watched them teaching and advised them about it afterwards, and gave practical demonstration of how it should be done by taking the classes herself.

Offices.

All the nuns were given a special duty to attend to

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1) Lettres hist. II, p. 287.

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 154.

3) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> I, p. 280. and cp. 1) supra.

4) Lettres hist. I, p. 71.



either in connection with the school or the house. Their time was to be devoted in the right proportions to the interior life or practices of piety, and the active exercise of their office. The "Spirit of the Institute" thus explains the two-fold character of their life. "Si le travail de Marthe était utile, si le parti de Marie était meilleur, le vôtre est excellent, qui renferme l'un et l'autre." <sup>1)</sup>

It is a theme to which Madame de Maintenon constantly recurs, for in spite of all her explanations, she found that the nuns were only too apt to neglect the outward side for the inward. Sometimes it was the other way round, and this was equally dangerous, as Madame de Maintenon was well aware. This is shown by a letter which she wrote to Madame de Radouay in the early days, in 1692 - "Vous vous livrez toute entière à votre emploi: Dieu en est jaloux, et il veut toujours tenir la première place. Vous me direz que vous n'agissez que pour lui, mais ce n'est pas encore assez: il veut des temps qui soient employés uniquement avec lui." <sup>2)</sup>

Her ideal for the Dames de Saint Louis was that they should do everything for the service of God, giving faithfully to prayer, meditation and the reciting of their office the hours allowed

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<sup>1)</sup> L'Esprit de l'Institut § 2. Lettres .. sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup>  
I p. 138.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres hist. I, p. 213.

by their rule, and devoting the rest of their time to their duties in the school or house.

The five principal offices were those of Superior, Assistant, Novice mistress, Bursar and "Maitresse Générale des Classes." The nuns holding these posts formed a Council of Interior Management, which looked after all the small affairs of the community. They were elected for three years, but could hold the post for six, if re-elected to it.

Superior.

The Superior, naturally, was at the head of everything, and had to rule the whole community, as in all convents. There was nothing original or exceptional to Saint Cyr in the directions given by Madame de Maintenon to the Superior, but they are marked with her usual good sense: "Vous ne devez guère faire ce qu'une autre pourra faire," she wrote to a young superior in 1694, "afin de vous garder pour ce qui ne peut etre fait que par vous. Apprenez a vous faire soulager: il vous en restera toujours plus qu'a toute autre."

Assistant.

The Assistant was to be her right hand, not only taking the Superior's place if she were ill, but helping her in every possible way. In 1712, Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres hist. I, p. 333.

du Pérou: "Notre mere ne peut trop employer l'assistante; il faudrait la faire supleer a la maîtresse générale, et, en un mot, lui donner le plus d'affaires qu'on pourra." 1)

Bursar. There was nothing striking, either, about the duties of the Novice Mistress or the Bursar. The Bursar had to look after the general finance of the house, and keep an account of receipts and expenditure. The position of Novice Mistress was, naturally, a most important one. It was entrusted for some years even after 1694 to Sœur Marie-Constance Gobert of the Visitation of Chaillot, until the nuns of Saint Louis were old enough and experienced enough to undertake it themselves. The importance in which Madame de Maintenon held it is made clear by her letters to the Abbess of Comerfontaine (an offshoot of Saint Cyr, of which we shall speak later), to whom she wrote in 1708: "Il est certain que la maîtresse des novices est la plus importante charge de la maison et en un sens plus que la supérieure, qui n'a qu'à gouverner ce qu'elle a, pendant que l'autre doit former et choisir les sujets qu'on doit recevoir." 2)

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1) Lettres hist. II, p. 399.

2) MSS. in Bibl. Nat. (fonds fr. 11675). II<sup>e</sup> partie. "Divers Avis aux maîtresses des classes". Lettres à M<sup>lle</sup> de Vieffville. N<sup>o</sup> 68. 3 juillet 1708.

"Maîtresse  
générale."

The office of which Madame de Maintenon writes the most is that of "Maîtresse Générale des Classes", <sup>1)</sup> which she proudly claims to have created. The "Maîtresse Générale" was to be for the girls what the Superior was for the nuns: she was entirely responsible for them outside of their classes: it was she who opened the letters, arranged for the girls to see their parents in the parlour, visited them in the sick-room and exercised a general supervision over their behaviour in chapel, <sup>2)</sup> in the refectory, or going about the house. She also looked after the "Blacks", sending them to their different duties and seeing they were properly employed. She was to go to any class that deserved some special praise or blame, <sup>3)</sup> but on the whole her province was outside the classrooms and not inside, where the various mistresses reigned supreme.

Lesser  
offices.

The lesser positions, such as those of door-keeper, sacristine, mistress of the wardrobe, mistress of the linen room,

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 244.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 176, and p. 220-221.

<sup>3)</sup> Ibid. p. 245.

Class  
mistresses.

sick-nurse, housekeeper, etc., need only be mentioned here.

All these nuns had their contribution to make towards the education of the girls, but the ones who were most closely associated with this work were the mistresses of the four classes. Each class had four mistresses, one being responsible for it, and the other three acting under her orders.

It is quite clear that these three were definitely meant to be subordinate to the first mistress. This is a point stressed by Madame de Maintenon in many of her instructions as, for example, in the following, which took place in 1702: "Elle commença par nous dire qu'elle avait bien coeur d'établir l'autorité des premières maîtresses, et de convaincre les subalternes que c'est cette première qui doit répondre de tout, qu'ainsi il faut qu'elle tienne ce qu'on appelle les rênes du gouvernement, que les autres doivent à la vérité travailler avec elle, mais dépendamment d'elle, et qu'enfin elle doit être dans sa charge comme la supérieure est dans toute la maison." <sup>1)</sup> The object of this arrangement was to make it easier to establish a real uniformity in each class: this was more likely to come about if one mistress made the plans, and the rest carried out her instructions, than if all four acted independently. Patience and co-operation, those

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 373. cp. p. 173.

are the subjects to which Madame de Maintenon comes back again and again in her advice to the nuns employed in the classes, and this co-operation was not to be confined to the mistresses working in the same class, but was to extend through out the whole school:<sup>1)</sup> "il faudrait ... que vos demoiselles trouvassent dans toutes les maitresses une telle conformite, qu'elles ne sentissent pas meme la difference d'une classe a l'autre". Thus co-operation played an important part in the educational system of Madame de Maintenon, and we shall come back to a fuller discussion of it in the next section.

#### 8. The girls.

At Saint-Cyr, the nuns were not the most important section of the community, but the girls: "Saint-Louis est fait uniquement pour former les jeunes demoiselles et celles qui sont nécessaires pour les instruire;"<sup>2)</sup> "Tout est fait pour les demoiselles et pour leur éducation,"<sup>3)</sup> or again, "Vous devez considerer que vous n'êtes point ici pour vous: tout s'y fait par rapport aux demoiselles."<sup>4)</sup> The girls were still admitted between the ages of seven and twelve, and kept until they were twenty. These years were passed in

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 31 - 33.

2) Lettres hist. I, p. 67.

3) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 211.

4) Lettres hist. I, p. 330.

Separation  
from their  
families.

almost complete separation from their families. The parents were allowed to visit them in the parlour at Saint-Cyr four times a year only. Even then, they might only stay half an hour and there was always a nun present in the room, though the conversation might be carried on in a whisper.<sup>1)</sup> This isolation from their families seems to me one of the weakest spots in the educational system of Madame de Maintenon, especially as the avowed aim of Saint-Cyr was to prepare the girls not for the convent, but for family life. In theory she emphasizes the importance of teaching the girls to honour their father and mother, but in practice her whole attitude towards the parents is one of mistrust: she expects them to interfere and be troublesome and, as the school is under no obligation to them in accepting their daughters, she is determined to make the separation complete.

Monotony still  
broken by  
visits.

Nevertheless, life at Saint-Cyr was not altogether monotonous. Besides the feasts of the Christian year,<sup>2)</sup> which were naturally celebrated with special rejoicing, the girls were given various treats or holidays in honour of public events, such as a victory or the signing of a treaty.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 203.

2) *ibid.* I, p. 72.

3) *cp.* Lettres hist. II, p. 401 (for the peace of Utrecht in 1713).

Moreover, in spite of the reform, they still had visitors from court: in the years between 1696 and 1704, the king came down frequently to see them. On one occasion, he gave names to all the paths and shrubberies in the garden:<sup>1)</sup> another time, in 1704, the girls sang and danced to him in the grounds; and he always talked to the nuns in their common room, and spent some time in the chapel.<sup>2)</sup>

Duchess of  
Burgundy a  
frequent  
visitor.

The visitor who came the most often in those years, however, was the little Duchess of Burgundy, Marie-Adelaide of Savoy. By the terms of the treaty between her father and Louis XIV, she was promised in marriage to the heir to the French crown, the Dauphin's eldest son. She arrived in France in 1696, and everyone was charmed with her. Madame de Maintenon had special charge of her, and, as part of her education, she used to take her to Saint-Cyr, where she was of the same age as those of the youngest class, the Reds. The first visit took place in state, but thereafter the princess came and went much as she pleased, and played and worked with the rest, especially with Mademoiselle d'Aubigne, niece of Madame de Maintenon. Even after her marriage, which took place in 1699 when she was only eleven years old,

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<sup>1)</sup> Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé .. ch. 25.

<sup>2)</sup> Lavallée. ch. 10. p. 231.

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she used still to come to Saint-Cyr: this is what is said of her in the 'Mémoires': "Cette princesse se comportait ici comme une particulière; elle était bonne et affable à tout le monde, allait dans les offices, voyait comme tout s'y faisait, s'en informait, se mettait elle-même à faire mille choses qui, en la divertissant, ne laissaient pas de lui donner de l'intelligence." There was great mourning at Saint-Cyr when she died in 1712.

#### Time-table.

It seems that the girls' time was planned out in the same way after the Reform as before: the form mistresses were always free to make what use they liked of the hours spent in class, so that the changes brought about by the Reform would merely affect the way in which these hours were employed, and would not be marked down on any time-table.

#### Religious education.

All the education at Saint-Cyr was based on religion. This emphatically does not mean that the school was merely a training ground for the convent: this was as far as ever from the aim of the foundress, who longed to settle all her daughters in the world, if she could only find sufficient sons-in-law. What it does mean is that the girls were to be trained at all times in the Christian virtues, and to be instructed in the teachings of the Church. The catechism

formed the most important part of this instruction:<sup>1)</sup> that of Chartres was the one used, and Madame de Maintenon advises the nuns to teach it in the same way as did their confessors, the priests of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul - "qui est de poser d'abord pour fondement ce que dit le catéchisme, et puis d'ajouter des questions qui leur fassent comprendre par jugement ce qu'elles savent par mémoire, et ne pas embrasser trop de matières à la fois."<sup>2)</sup> Religious instruction was not confined to the catechism, however, but was given on other books as well, which varied a little in the different classes,<sup>3)</sup> so that there was something fresh in each, but the nuns were warned to use no books which had not been sanctioned for use in the school, and to consult their directors before teaching anything as authoritative which they had thought of for themselves.<sup>4)</sup> Lastly, most of Madame de Maintenon's "Entretiens" with the various classes were on religion, and to the end as at Rueil she preached "une piété simple, droite et solide", and took every opportunity to inspire her listeners with a love of it.<sup>5)</sup>

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 400.

2) *ibid.* p. 227.

3) Lettres hist. II, p. 209.

4) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 76.

5) For an example of such teaching cp. Lettres sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 36 - 41.

### Domestic education.

Manual work, especially sewing, and training in all kinds of housework, played an even more important part in the education of Saint-Cyr after the Reform than before. In the first ardour of the Reform, it was almost the only occupation the girls were given in class, and though the balance was gradually restored, a great deal of time was still devoted to domestic work. When their help was needed, they did the housework, tidying the rooms and sweeping and dusting.<sup>1)</sup> Again, the older girls, the "Blacks", who helped the various officers, had an opportunity of learning something about the running of the whole house. Above all, everyone spent much time on needlework, but only on making useful things - for Madame de Maintenon told the nuns one day in jest the dreadful things that would happen to them if they wasted their time on fancy work: "Si jamais cela vous arrive, je viendrai de l'autre monde après ma mort, faire un bruit effroyable pour épouvanter celles qui auraient des occupations si contraires à mes intentions".<sup>2)</sup>

### Instruction.

Less is said about ordinary class lessons than about either religious or domestic education, but it does not follow from this that they were neglected. The syllabus was certainly limited; reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, music, drawing,

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettres hist. II, p. 304.

<sup>2)</sup>Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 139.

history and geography - this is all that is mentioned, but Madame de Maintenon wanted her pupils to be well grounded in these. In 1717 she writes to the mistresses of the two youngest classes to say that she is not satisfied with the progress made there: she thinks the fault may lie with some of the bigger girls to whom the work of teaching reading, writing and spelling was entrusted, and she goes on to say: "Cependant vous savez en quel ordre on vous a marqué les exercices et que ceux que je viens de dire (i.e. la lecture etc.) marchent immédiatement après le catéchisme."<sup>1</sup>) It was in the Yellow class, however, that she expected the most time to be given to lessons: this is what she wrote to their mistress in 1711: "En faisant des réflexions sur vos classes, ce qui m'arrive très souvent, je trouvais que la vôtre est celle qui a le plus besoin d'instruction. Les deux petites passent la plus grande partie de leur temps à apprendre le catéchisme, la lecture, l'écriture, l'arithmétique et le reste: les bleues sont très séparées: elles vont dans les offices, dans les petites classes et deviennent noires; je n'en vois pas de plus sédentaires que les vôtres, et il faut en profiter."<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup>)Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 399.

<sup>2</sup>)Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 267.

It must be admitted, though, even by the most fervent partisans of Saint-Cyr, that the programme of studies was restricted, and the standard of attainment low. Little was taught beyond the elements: history and geography certainly were admitted, but a wide knowledge of them was not encouraged. History was taught from the little manual written by the Abbé Le Ragois, nephew of the Abbé Gobelin, and one of the last lessons given by Madame de Maintenon was to the older girls on the great people of their own time,<sup>1)</sup> but, to begin with, all she wished was for the girls to have "une légère connaissance pour ne pas prendre un empereur romain pour un empereur de la Chine ou du Japon, un roi d'Espagne ou d'Angleterre pour un roi de Perse ou de Siam".<sup>2)</sup> In geography it was the same thing: "Je pense comme vous sur la géographie," she wrote to Madame du Pérou in 1711; "il ne faut là-dessus qu'une connaissance légère des choses principales".<sup>3)</sup> No one could bring the charge against Saint-Cyr of training any "femmes savantes".

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 394.

2) Ibid. I, p. 231.

3) Lettres hist. II, p. 333.

## § 13

Retirement of  
M<sup>me</sup>. de Main-  
tenon to  
St. Cyr.

Thus the life of the school went on through the last fifteen years of the reign of Louis XIV. The misfortunes of the time were naturally felt there. The wars brought about many bereavements in the families of the girls. There were certain privations during the famine and there were dreadful epidemics, one, in particular, of smallpox, when twelve girls died in two months,<sup>1)</sup> and another of measles in 1711, when one hundred and twenty had it at the same time.<sup>2)</sup> Apart from these there were no outstanding events in the school's history until Madame de Maintenon came to live at Saint-Cyr, on the death of the king, in 1715.

Her arrival cannot have made much difference to the girls. They would see her, as before, but now more frequently, in chapel, and, until she became too old, she went round the classes teaching as before. When she was no longer able for that she would ask for certain girls to be sent to her room and she would teach them there.<sup>3)</sup> But for the nuns her presence must have made a considerable difference, for she tried to be present every day at their recreations.<sup>4)</sup> "Après

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1) Lavalée. ch. 12, p. 263.

Monéry. M<sup>me</sup>. de Maintenon Infirmière.

2) Geffroy. II, p. 282.

3) Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 390...  
Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé... ch. 29.

4) Mémoires sur M<sup>me</sup>. de Maintenon. p. 100.

son dîner, elle allait à la récréation avec les dames de la communauté. On l'a vue très-souvent se relever pour aller à la récréation, se coucher après, afin d'être en état de retourner à celle du soir, croyant faire un bien, et disant que souvent à la récréation, elle y glissait de certaines choses qui faisaient plus d'impression que dans une instruction sérieuse. Elle regardait aussi comme une bonne oeuvre de contribuer par sa présence au plaisir des dames, de leur marquer son amitié, et de leur dire mille choses qui pouvaient leur donner moyen d'être plus éclairées que les autres religieuses et d'être par là plus propres à instruire les demoiselles." Her great occupation, therefore, as always, was teaching; and, in addition to contributing by her presence to the pleasure and the utility of the nuns' recreations and to teaching the girls, she instructed the novices for two hours a day in her room.<sup>1)</sup>

Thus, when her death came in 1719, great was the mourning at Saint-Cyr, for she was no distant benefactor whom they had lost, who, having founded the school, left it to run its own course, but one who knew it all down to the smallest details and who had shared in its life. There must have been many

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<sup>1)</sup> Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé.... ch. 30.

who said, on hearing of her death, "Saint-Cyr will never be the same again" - and, for once, they spoke the truth.

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§ 14  
The Last Years  
of S. Cyr.

M<sup>me</sup> de Glapion  
superior.

Madame de Glapion was the superior of Saint-Cyr at the time of the death of Madame de Maintenon.<sup>1)</sup> She had been at school there since the early days at Noisy: it was she who had played Mardochee at the famous performance of Esther and when she was old enough she was admitted to take vows. During her noviciate she had been sent to help in the classes and had done well, but after her reception into the community she was mainly employed in the infirmary for she had a remarkable gift for nursing. Unfortunately she was a prey to all sorts of doubts regarding her vocation and she was naturally of a serious and even melancholy disposition. Madame de Maintenon writes to her again and again exhorting her to a greater confidence and cheerfulness.<sup>2)</sup> She forbade her to go on with her work in the infirmary, but fresh troubles arose when she was away from it, for she undertook whatever she did, were it geography or music, with such ardour that it seemed to

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1) For M<sup>me</sup>. de Glapion cp. Lavallee. ch. 14, p. 287.  
Haussonville I, introd. § 3, p. XLII.

2) Lettres Hist. II, pp. 57-63 and passim.



Madame de Maintenon to stand in the way of her true perfection. Madame de Maintenon grew more and more attached to her, however, and by 1716, when all Madame de Glapion's troubles had been dispelled, she was elected superior. As Madame de Maintenon was then living at Saint-Cyr they saw much of each other and could spend much time together. It was then that they had those private talks, of which a record has survived and which form most valuable evidence for the life of Madame de Maintenon. Thus, no one was better fitted to carry on the work of Madame de Maintenon, for no one knew her intentions better nor had a longer acquaintance with the school. At the same time it is clear that she would wish no change whatever to be made in what had been established, and that thus she would institute that policy of immobility and living on past glories which was the greatest weakness of the Saint-Cyr of the eighteenth century.

S. Cyr in reign  
of Louis XV.

Thus the life of the school went on, unchanged, all through the reign of Louis XV.<sup>1)</sup> There were various financial difficulties, especially after the death of the Regent, but these were gradually solved. Royal visits began again. The first was that of the young king in 1720. He was only twelve years old and he had been brought to make his communion

a) visits.

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<sup>1)</sup> For this later history of S. Cyr cp. espec. Lavallée. ch. 15, 16.  
Taphanel. Le théâtre de S. Cyr, ch. 12-16.

in the chapel at Saint-Cyr. There were great rejoicings on that occasion for it was felt that royal protection was again being extended to the school and that its future was assured. The Infanta of Spain was another visitor in these years. She was the daughter of Philip V and had been promised in marriage to Louis XV. This arrangement was finally broken and she was sent away and the king married the princess of Poland, Marie Leczinska. Three days after her marriage, in 1725, the queen came to visit Saint-Cyr and told the nuns that she wished to be a second Madame de Maintenon to them and had an apartment given her in the house. Their joy knew no bounds, but they were soon to discover how great a difference there was between the two, for Marie Leczinska, for all her good intentions, had very little influence and no interest whatever in education. Nevertheless, she went into retreat from time to time at Saint-Cyr and was present at the various ceremonies of taking of vows.

b) theatricals.

On the request of Marie Leczinska, "Esther" was revived in 1731. It was acted simply in one of the classrooms and with no other costumes than the ordinary uniform. Perhaps the queen found it too simple for her taste, for the nuns did not fail to notice how little interest she took in the

performance. In 1745, 1747 and 1750 there were more theatricals, for the girls acted the "Idyll of Saint-Cyr" to various royal visitors, and in 1756 they gave performances first of "Esther" and then of "Athalie" in all their ancient splendour to amuse the princesses who had just come back from school at Fontévrault.

c) Louis XV  
and S. Cyr.

The king himself took little interest in Saint-Cyr. He did not send his daughters to be educated there and he expressed at least one very unfavourable criticism upon it when he said: "Ces filles sont des bégueules: Madame de Maintenon s'est bien trompée avec d'excellentes intentions. Elles sont élevées de manière qu'il faudrait de toutes en faire des Dames du palais, sans quoi elles sont malheureuses et impertinentes." 1) Nevertheless he added to its revenues in order to provide more money for dowries for the girls.

d) Walpole's  
visit.

A description of Saint-Cyr at the end of the reign of Louis XV is given by Horace Walpole, 2) who visited it in 1769 and wrote about it afterwards to George Montagu. According to him nothing had been changed either in the

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1) Mémoires de M<sup>e</sup> du Hausset, p. 98. (publ. Baudouin. 1824.)

2) Letter to G. Montagu. Sep. 17, 1769.

arrangement of the house or in the education given there since the time of Madame de Maintenon. There were the same books, the same plays, the same furniture, the same dances, the same music. Madame de Maintenon's instructions to make no change had been kept to the very letter.

S. Cyr in the  
reign of  
Louis XVI.

Conservatism.

Riches.

This rigid conservatism is as strongly marked as ever in the reign of Louis XVI, but there were signs then, too, of another failing and one from which, by the very terms of their foundation, the nuns should have been saved, namely a certain delight in piling up possessions. No doubt it arose from the fact that they felt uncertain of the future now that their protectress was dead, and that they wished, quite legitimately, to make provision for all the girls who were dependent on them. But this is not sufficient to explain the increase in their revenues from 225,600 livres to 496,000, nor the small but significant fact that they exchanged their little parlour for a far more luxuriously furnished room.

Relations with  
the royal  
family.

During this reign they saw little of the royal family. The king let his charities pass through their hands, and when a certain priory at Troarn fell into decay he used the money

coming from it, 14,000 livres a year, to found an order of canonesses, 1) of which all the places were to be given to girls educated at Saint-Cyr, "dans la vue de leur procurer", as it said in the Letters Patent, "un asile contre l'infortune en leur donnant un état mitoyen entre le monde et le cloître." Marie Antoinette shewed little interest in Saint-Cyr, but the king's sister, Madame Elizabeth, who had had two Saint-Cyriennes as governesses, used to visit it frequently, and it was she who presided at the centenary celebrations in 1786. The last visitor of any note was the Marechal de Boufflers, who was shown over the school in March, 1791, 2) and who was as astonished as Walpole at all the survivals of a past age which he found there.

#### The Revolution.

1789

The consternation caused at Saint-Cyr by the Revolution can perhaps be best imagined by thinking of the community as having fallen asleep in 1719 to wake up in 1791. The first effects were really felt rather sooner, for there were various signs of the hostility of the villagers to the school, on account of its riches, as early as 1789, and the nuns had to shut themselves in more closely than ever. In 1790 the king

1790

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1) According to the list published by Fleury-Vindry in the "Demoiselles de S. Cyr", 14 girls became canonesses of Troarn.

2) cp. Letter to the Duchess of Biron, 20 March, 1791.

1791

made a great concession to the new democratic ideas, for he opened the school to the daughters of any officer of the army or navy, whether of noble birth or not. In the same year the nuns began to lose some of their revenues and they had to submit to an inventory being taken of all their possessions. In 1791 they were reduced to a state of great poverty as all their possessions were sold, the girl's dowries were suppressed and the nuns were no longer allowed to wear their habit. Moreover, as their confessors, the priests of the Mission, had refused to take the oath to the Constitution they had to leave and the chapel was closed for a while until their place was taken by other priests who had taken the oath. The school continued to survive, however, thanks to the decree of the 26 September which laid down "que les corps... d'éducation publique continueraient provisoirement d'exister sous leur régime actuel."

1792

The final decree which ordered the suppression of all convents except hospitals came on August 7th, 1792. Saint-Cyr still went on for some months all the same, partly because of the nuns' pertinacity, and partly because they were allowed a little time in which to make arrangements for sending their pupils home. One of the first of those to go was Marie Anne

1793 de Buonaparte, whose brother, the future emperor, came to escort her home at the beginning of September, but there was still a large household left to chant the De Profundis for the death of the king on the twenty-first of January. Finally the girls were all sent home between the thirtieth of March and the twenty-seventh of April, 1793, and on May 1st the last of the nuns left the house.

The history of Saint-Cyr thereafter as a military hospital and then as a school for training officers does not concern us here. The foundation of Madame de Maintenon was entirely swept away, but before it went various institutions had sprung into life modelled upon it. Others, existing already, had been influenced by it; theorists had taken ideas from it, and even in the nineteenth century schools were to be created in a direct line of descent from Saint-Cyr. It is to a survey of these that we must turn now, after a short criticism of the main features of the educational system of Madame de Maintenon.

### III. THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF MADAME DE MAINTENON.

#### SYNOPSIS.

Introduction - scope of the chapter - to emphasize some of the distinctive characteristics of Saint-Cyr.

p.112

1. Saint-Cyr an aristocratic foundation. p.112
2. Secularisation of education at Saint-Cyr - before Reform - even after Reform, some traces, i.e., a) real head was Mme de Maintenon, not a nun, b) aim of education preparation for the world. Conversations. c) encouragement to take an interest in outside events. p.114
3. Secularisation by no means complete. Benefits of having it a religious foundation - supervision - co-operation: helped by subordination of other mistresses to senior one in each class, and the establishment of the maîtresse générale - interchange of duties. p.122
4. Other features - foreshadowing modern educational theories. Individual attention - making learning pleasant: recreations and games: punishments and prizes - "Prefects" - "Monitors" - training of teachers. p.130
5. Adverse criticisms - separation from the family - gloomy view of life in the world - conservatism. p.146

Conclusion.



### III. THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF MADAME DE MAINTENON.

Introd<sup>n</sup>. - aim  
is to emphasize  
some charac-  
teristic  
features of  
S. Cyr.

The purpose of this chapter is to bring into relief those elements in the educational system of Madame de Maintenon which gave to Saint-Cyr its distinctive character. This does not mean that all the characteristics which are to be discussed were introduced for the first time into girls' education by Madame de Maintenon. But most of them owed their origin to her, while even those which she had inherited from her predecessors were placed by her in a fresh light and given a new importance.

1. S. Cyr an  
aristocratic  
foundation.

The first thing that marks Saint-Cyr off from other schools is that it was meant exclusively for girls of noble family. This is laid down quite definitely in the Letters of Foundation<sup>1)</sup> and all candidates for admission had to prove one hundred and forty years of nobility on their fathers' side<sup>2)</sup>. Schools before Saint-Cyr had

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1) Lettres de fondation. Preuves de noblesse. Rosmorduc.

2) Constitutions (Bibl. Nat. MSS. fonds fr. 8598) § iii.

welcomed girls of noble family rather than others<sup>1)</sup>, but there is no example of a previous foundation open to them alone. Nor could this peculiarity be always copied by the schools which took Saint-Cyr for their model<sup>2)</sup>, though it re-appears in some of them - notably in the foundations of Napoleon in France and of Catherine the Great in Russia.

Madame de  
Maintenon's  
ideas on  
society.

It is easy to criticize this aristocratic tendency and to attribute it to a narrow-minded snobbishness on the part of Madame de Maintenon, who was little more than a parvenue herself. But this would be to overlook its real meaning. Madame de Maintenon certainly had no wish to see social classes abolished - even supposing this were possible - and she would have been horrified by the ideas of equality and fraternity of a hundred years later. She believed that people were born into different spheres of life and had in consequence different duties to fulfil<sup>3)</sup>. But each class had its own particular obligations towards society as a whole, and had to be trained to undertake them. The fundamental idea, therefore, in her social teaching is the spirit of

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1) e.g. Port Royal.

2) e.g. Gomerfontaine, Biszy, etc. cp. Lettres ..  
sur l'Educn. II, p. 296.

3) Lettres hist., I, p. 284 cp. Lettres ...  
sur l'Educn. I, p. 1.

service<sup>1)</sup>, and, as much had been given to the daughters of the noble families of France, much would be required of them. Hence their education was of especial importance, and Saint-Cyr was to devote itself to them alone.

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## 2. Secularisation.

Of more importance than its aristocratic character is the fact that Saint-Cyr made a definite step towards the secularisation of girls' education. The words "made a definite step towards" have been used advisedly, for it is not true to say that Madame de Maintenon either inaugurated this policy or achieved her aim. Attempts had been made before her, notably by the Ursulines<sup>2)</sup>, to give girls an education which would prepare them for life in the world and not merely for becoming nuns, but Saint-Cyr went farther than this. The original type of education given there was meant to stand out in contrast to the narrow training of the average convent school<sup>3)</sup>, and, even after the Reform, education for life was emphasized as distinct from apprenticeship for the convent.

## Before Reform.

The original plan of Saint-Cyr was a bold experiment.

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1) Lettres hist. I, p. 66. Conseils I, p. 355 - 362.

2) Leymont. M<sup>me</sup> de Sainte Beuve et les Ursulines de Paris, XI.

3) Memoires des dames, ch. 7.

It was not to be a convent or to recall a convent in any way, either by the clothes or title of the mistresses, or by over-emphasizing external practices of piety and neglecting solid instruction, so as to send its pupils out into the world without any knowledge to guide them in it.<sup>1)</sup> Its education was to be marked by a wideness and a degree of culture unknown before in girls' schools. The girls were to read widely and discuss what they read: they were to be trained to reason for themselves, to take for their models in writing the best authors of the day, to fill their minds with good things.<sup>2)</sup> The exterior side of their education was to be marked by the same broad-mindedness: their uniform was to be gay with ribbons; they were to learn to hold themselves well, to move well, to dance, to sing, to recite.<sup>3)</sup> All this education was naturally to be based on religion, but a religion whose fundamental idea was "the glorious liberty of the children of God", preaching love, not fear, freedom, not the scrupulous observance of an external rule.<sup>4)</sup> This education was to make them sensible

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1) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I. p. 65.

2) Lettres hist. I, p. 276.

3) Ribbons. Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé, Ch. 18.

Dance, etc. Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I. p. 319.

Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé.. Ch. 14.

4) Lettres ... sur l'educ<sup>n</sup> I. pp. 77-87.

and attractive women, who would take their place effectively in society and form a nucleus by which the benefits of Saint-Cyr would be spread to every part of France.

Reasons for  
the Reform.

In this first plan for her school Madame de Maintenon showed an enterprise and a wideness of vision in advance of her age. She broke completely with the tradition that for girls the only alternative to education at home was education in the convent and that the aim of girls' education was to preserve them from the world rather than to prepare them for it. She substituted for the conventual ideal that of the cultured woman of the Salon combined with the virtuous woman of the Book of Proverbs. But she found the path beset with difficulties and just as, in the old days, on the advice of the abbé Gobelin, she had renounced her gifts of conversation and tried not to sparkle in society, believing that course to be necessary for her moral good,<sup>1)</sup> so now she abandoned her first scheme for Saint-Cyr, brilliant and attractive and outwardly sound as it was, for one barer and more austere, because she was convinced that only so could her pupils be brought up in the best way.

After the  
Reform.

The reform at Saint-Cyr began with a violent reaction, which has been already described,<sup>2)</sup> against the wide ideas

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<sup>1)</sup>Noailles. I., Ch. 6. p. 310.

<sup>2)</sup>Supra, Ch. II, §10.

Still some  
advance made  
towards secu-  
larisation.

of secular learning and general culture which had been accepted there at first. After this stage was passed the school settled down into its second and permanent form. Its mistresses were nuns bound by solemn vows. Its confessors were members of a community. An end was put to the magnificent theatrical performances of earlier days, and school life and learning were shorn of their adornments. In short, the practical and religious side of education were emphasized at the expense of the cultural. Yet, even in this latter form, Saint-Cyr can still be said to have made an advance upon its predecessors in the matter of secularisation.

1. M<sup>me</sup> de  
Maintenon -  
laywomen, not  
nun - at head.

In the first place the real head of Saint-Cyr was not a nun at all, but Madame de Maintenon herself. Even from the time of the foundation she had been appointed "superieure spirituelle" by the bishop of Chartres,<sup>1)</sup> and when Madame de Brinon was dismissed and the nominal superior was only twenty-two years old, it was only natural that the real power should belong to the foundress.<sup>2)</sup> This power she continued to exercise all her life: the nuns recognised it, and knew that the superior whom they elected was only, so to speak, an apprentice-superior, being trained to fill

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1) Lavallée. Ch. 3. p. 67.

2) Noailles, 3. ch. 1. p. 127.

the position when Madame de Maintenon would be no longer able to hold it. This is made clear by Madame du Pérou's comment on the election of Madame de la Poype de Vertrieux<sup>1)</sup>; after saying that there were many others who would have done equally well, she adds: "Madame de Maintenon avait envie d'essayer de celle-ci dans cette place, afin d'en avoir plusieurs qui y eussent passé de son vivant, et que dans la suite on en eût davantage à choisir. Elle ne hasardait rien à ces épreuves, parce qu'étant la principale supérieure, les autres ne seraient que guidées par elle." Thus Saint-Cyr had a lay principal - an important step in the history of the laicization of schools.

2. Aim -  
training for  
the world.

Again, even after the Reform, the education given at Saint-Cyr was definitely secular, a training for the world. Far from its pupils being given the "little habit" to wear,<sup>2)</sup> and encouraged to share in the exercises of the community as far as they could, the ideal set before them was the home, and not the monastic life. Madame de Maintenon would have

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé ... ch. 29.

2) cf. the Visitation convent schools and Port Royal. ("La Visitation. 1610-1910. Les soeurs du petit habit et les pensionnats." 1914. Cadet. L'éduc<sup>n</sup>. à Port Royal. Introd. §10. "De l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. des filles à Port Royal".)

Teaching  
about  
marriage.

liked to be able to find husbands for all her pupils,<sup>1)</sup> and instructions on marriage suitable to their age were given to them.<sup>2)</sup> In these instructions, the difficulties and duties of married life are never minimized, and the girls are not encouraged to cherish any romance about it.<sup>3)</sup> In fact, they might well have resulted, not in preparing the girls for homes of their own, but in warning them against them, but even this was better than passing the subject over in silence, or implying that the only course open to any girl on leaving school was to enter a convent.

"Conversations"  
as preparation  
for society.

Another example of this same training for life in the world is afforded by the "Conversations" written by Madame de Maintenon. These were written on such subjects as "The danger of bad company", "Letters", "Reading", "Friendship", "The Spirit of the World"<sup>4)</sup> - to mention only a few - and were really short plays for half a dozen characters who discuss and define the subject, and into whose mouths Madame de Maintenon put the sentiments with which she wished to inspire her pupils. These "Conversations"

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1) Lavallée. ch. 11. p. 238. "Ce qui me manque, ce sont des gendres."

2) Conseils, I, p. 34. Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 346...

3) Geffroy, II, p. 9-12.

4) Conseils, I, p. 419, 431, 448, 325, 473, etc.



were very popular; in fact, Madame de Maintenon had to warn the nuns not to spend too much time on rehearsing them.

She would have liked a class to be allowed to learn one as a reward for doing its other work well, but she did not want it to be done in lesson time, but during recreation.<sup>1)</sup>

Schools modelled on Saint-Cyr were anxious to copy this feature of its educational system,<sup>2)</sup> and it was to the principal of one such school, Madame de la Mairie, that Madame de Maintenon explained her reasons for writing them and said: "Les Conversations ont été faites pour éclairer nos Dames de Saint Louis, qui ne peuvent guère savoir, ayant été élevées à Saint-Cyr, que rien n'est si dangereux que les mauvaises compagnies, qu'on ne peut avoir trop de soin de sa réputation, qu'il ne faut jamais recevoir des présents des hommes, qu'il faut les éviter comme nos plus grands ennemis, puisque pour l'ordinaire ils nous flattent pour nous perdre."<sup>3)</sup> Madame de Maintenon may have mistrusted the ordinary society of her time, but nevertheless she gave her pupils some preparation for it.

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 221-223.

2) Ibid, p. 296, 294.

3) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 330.

3. Interest  
encouraged in  
political  
events.

Finally, the secular tendency of the education of Saint-Cyr is shown by the interest which the girls were encouraged to take in contemporary events.<sup>1)</sup> Many of them would not require much encouragement: they would have fathers or brothers fighting in the king's armies, and news of treaties and sieges, victories or defeats would be of the most absorbing personal interest to them. Even the most apathetic could hardly fail to share in the excitement of victory, when Madame de Maintenon was summoned, perhaps from the middle of a lesson, to speak to a messenger sent by the King, and come back with the news of a battle won, whereupon the whole school would go to sing a Te Deum in the chapel and spend the rest of the day in recreation.<sup>2)</sup> To such an extent was the interest taken by the community in public events a matter of common knowledge that it was even the subject of a satire published in Holland in 1693 entitled "Les Lamentations des Dames de Saint-Cyr sur la reprise de Mons".<sup>3)</sup> But the girls were taught to do more than merely to rejoice in their country's victories: examples

"Civics" at  
S. Cyr.

1) Lavallée. ch. 10. p. 205...

2) Geffroy, II, p. 263.

3) Rousselot. Hist. de l'Educat<sup>n</sup>. des Femmes en France, ch. 7. § 3.

can be found of instructions given by Madame de Maintenon on loyalty, on paying taxes, on military service and kindred subjects.<sup>1)</sup> These are not sufficient to be called a course of civics:<sup>2)</sup> Madame de Maintenon did not believe in courses, but in treating various subjects as opportunity arose: but they do show that the girls brought up at the royal foundation were to be trained to take an interest in the affairs of their country.

## 3

Secularisation  
by no means  
complete.  
Advantages of  
a religious  
foundation.

Thus, even after the Reform, Saint-Cyr might be described not so much as a convent where girls were educated, as a school where the teachers were under vows. Its aim was education above all things. The nuns were there to teach or to contribute to the smooth running of the school, and everything else, even the development of their own inner life, was to be considered as a means towards this end.<sup>3)</sup> Nevertheless, the fact remains that the teachers were under vows, and hence Madame de Maintenon cannot be said to have secularized girls' education, though Saint-Cyr marked an

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1) *Conseils*, I, p. 67, 338-48.

2) As in Rousselot, *op. cit.*, ch. 7. § 3.

3) *Lettres hist.* I, p. 64..73.

advance towards this. It is an interesting question whether she did not gain more than she lost by having a religious instead of a lay foundation. For my own part, I am inclined to think that her system would not have succeeded anywhere except in a convent school. A few examples will serve to make this clearer.

#### 1) Supervision.

In her instructions to the Ladies of Saint-Louis, one of the subjects to which Madame de Maintenon comes back most frequently is the necessity for the nuns to show an untiring diligence in supervising their pupils. The girls were not to be left alone for a moment, night or day. In their classrooms and dormitories, in chapel or the refectory, in the passages or the garden - at all times and in all places they were to be accompanied and watched over.<sup>1)</sup> They were not allowed to whisper to one another. Even on those rare and too short quarters of an hour when they saw their parents in the parlour, the interview took place in the presence of a nun.<sup>2)</sup> There were to be no dark corners in the house where they could get out of sight, and lights were kept burning in the dormitory all night, so that they

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 23, 211-213, 266., II, p. 63, 350.  
Lettres hist., II, p. 339.

<sup>2)</sup>Ibid, I. p. 203. (Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>.)

might be watched even while they slept.<sup>1)</sup> This is not the place to criticize this system of constant supervision: foreign as it is to English ideas of the twentieth century, it was probably necessary in France in the eighteenth. Two things are certain. First, Madame de Maintenon considered this supervision of the utmost importance.<sup>2)</sup> Secondly, she urged it from the highest motives: to her thinking the nuns who watched thus over the girls were merely showing the same care for them as a mother should for her daughters:<sup>3)</sup> It might almost be said to form the basis of her educational system. It was therefore an indispensable condition for the success of her scheme that the mistresses should be untiring in exercising this supervision. She is quite ready to admit that it is an irksome duty, especially in the dormitories at night, and one of which they will not always see the necessity; but she is able to propose that they should undertake it instead of the ordinary austerities of the religious life.<sup>4)</sup> This would, of course, have been impossible if Saint-Cyr had been a secular foundation and hence it affords one instance of

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 215.

2) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 66-67.

3) Conseils, II, p. 50 .. 57.

4) Lettres hist. I, p. 123, 324.

Madame de Maintenon's profiting by having nuns, not lay teachers, under her.

ii) Co-operation.

Another point, which Madame de Maintenon considered as important as this constant supervision, was the need for all those who had charge of the girls to work together in harmony. She preached this union between the mistresses as the thing which was the most essential for the discipline of the school.<sup>1)</sup> She would have preferred some to do rather less well in order that all should do alike, and she bade them renounce the pleasure of being more liked or more feared than the rest.<sup>2)</sup> She advised them not to criticize the way the girls had been trained in the classes before theirs but to wait for a year and see whether they had taught them any better themselves.<sup>3)</sup> Not only were they to refrain from passing judgment upon the work of their predecessors, they were not to allow any criticism of their colleagues, either among themselves<sup>4)</sup> or from their pupils.<sup>5)</sup> In a word, the unity between them was to be so

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 218. II, p. 31.

2) Ibid. II, p. 33.

3) Ibid. I, p. 303.

4) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I. p. 116, 301-2.

5) Ibid. I, p. 308-310.

great that the girls would see no difference between one mistress and another or one class and another.<sup>1)</sup>

Co-operation  
rendered easier  
by

a) subordination  
of other form  
mistresses to  
senior one  
in each class.

There were two practical suggestions which Madame de Maintenon had to make as means of achieving this unity. There were four mistresses in each class, and if all had had equal authority, much time would have been wasted in discussions between them,<sup>2)</sup> and the girls would have been divided into parties, some preferring one and some another.<sup>3)</sup> It was therefore the rule that the first mistress should have supreme authority over, and responsibility for, the class: the other three were simply her assistants and acted on her orders. Theirs was an entirely subordinate position, and their duty was to carry out her commands. They were not to praise or punish or advise the girls, but to refer them simply to the first mistress.<sup>4)</sup> For her part, she was to be consistent in her dealings with her subordinates, not sometimes giving way to them and then offended because they did not treat her with all respect,

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1) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 32.

2) Ibid. I, p. 173.

3) Ibid. I, p. 163-164.

4) Ibid. I, p. 173, 307-308. II, p. 205.

but remembering always to take command, though not abusing her authority.<sup>1)</sup>

b) Institution  
of the  
"maîtresse  
générale."

Besides the senior mistress in each class there was the "maîtresse générale" of the school, who was of great importance in establishing this unity. Her charge, as will be remembered, was one of the most important in the house, and one about which Madame de Maintenon wrote a great deal.<sup>2)</sup> The "maîtresse générale" corresponded very roughly to the head mistress in a modern school, though she was concerned more with discipline than instruction. She was the girls' superior, and though she was subordinate to the real superior, she rarely referred to her in matters concerning the school. Her duties are laid down and explained by Madame de Maintenon in various places, but one quotation will be sufficient. "La maîtresse générale", she wrote to Madame du Pérou in 1703,<sup>3)</sup> "est pour avoir une vue sur les classes, afin qu'il ne leur manque aucun secours spirituel ni temporel.....; elle doit être parfaitement instruite de l'intention du fondateur, et prendre pour les demoiselles tous les soins du dehors,

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1) Lettres hist. II, p. 129-130.

2) e.g. Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 195-7, 213-218, 220-222, 244-246, 305-307 etc.

3) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 55.



afin que les maîtresses soient renfermées dans les classes. Suivant l'esprit de cette charge, il faut que la maîtresse générale facilite aux maîtresses le gouvernement, qu'elle les autorise, qu'elle les avertisse de ce qu'elle voit, qu'elle ait un grand soin que les maîtresses soient remplacées, qu'elle s'oppose le plus qu'elle pourra aux suppléantes." Many similar instructions could be quoted, for this was an office about which Madame de Maintenon wrote more than about any other, for she claimed to have founded it. This claim was, I think, mistaken. There was a "maîtresse générale" in the Ursuline convent school where she was educated herself, in the rue Saint-Jacques, many years before the foundation of Saint-Cyr, and she seems to have had the same duties as Madame de Maintenon assigned to hers.<sup>1)</sup> In one instruction about the "maîtresse générale", Madame de Maintenon had just asserted her claim to have created the charge, when she says: "J'ai été aux Ursulines, et je me souviens que quand la maîtresse générale venait aux classes, c'était une nouvelle dont on parlait quinze jours avant et quinze jours après."<sup>2)</sup> It is curious that she never acknowledges her debt, but her

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1) Leymont. "M<sup>me</sup> de Ste Beuve et les Ursulines de Paris", ch. 12, 18, cp. "Constitutions des Ursulines", quoted by Rencault "Les Ursulines de Rouen. 1619-1906", ch. 8.

2) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 196.

failure to do so can perhaps be explained on the grounds that, even if the position had existed before, she did not consciously imitate it, but thought it out afresh for herself and so came to believe that she was its founder. However that may be, no one can deny the importance of the office for establishing that unity among the mistresses which was the basis of the discipline at Saint-Cyr, and which had a far better chance of survival in a religious than a secular community.

iii) Inter-  
change of  
duties.

Another advantage which fell to Saint-Cyr from being a religious community was that there could be there a real interchange of duties. This stage has not been reached in lay schools even to-day, when an assistant mistress may indeed become a principal, but the reverse is most exceptional. There is no free passing up and down to different duties, now responsible, now subordinate, within the same school, and still less between one type of school and another. Yet the advantages of the scheme are obvious: besides the wider outlook and the new interest which it would bring to all teachers, it would make it possible for a mistress to find out if she were fitted for the most responsible posts, without being doomed to fill one, though incapable, for the rest of her life. But if the plan is to work at all, it

must be founded on loyalty to an unchanging ideal, and this was the reason for its success at Saint-Cyr.<sup>1)</sup> The positions were only held temporarily: an election was held for the important ones every three years, and no one could be re-elected to one more than once. In the classes, the first mistress and her subordinates seem to have changed places even more frequently. But if the result was not conflict and confusion, it was largely due to the fact that the Ladies of Saint-Louis were not only teachers but nuns.

Thus, three important elements in the educational system of Madame de Maintenon, supervision, co-operation, and interchange of duties, owed their success to the fact that Saint-Cyr was not a secular foundation, though it took a step towards secularisation. There are other features in her system too which deserve attention, both because of the importance attached to them at Saint-Cyr, and because they are interesting as foreshadowing various modern educational theories.

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1) This interchange of duties was a practice which Mme. de Maintenon recommended to the offshoots of St. Cyr, Bisy and Gomerfontaine. cp. Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 293, 353.

Individual  
attention.

Many parents to-day are anxious to send their children to schools where they will have individual attention, and many schools claim proudly that they treat their pupils in this way. It is no new idea: it existed even before Saint-Cyr, but there it was greatly emphasized. Jacqueline Pascal devoted a whole section of her "Règlement pour les enfants de Port-Royal" to the subject of private talks between the mistress and her pupils, - "ce qui facilite le plus la conduite des enfants", - and recommends that they should take place about once a fortnight.<sup>1)</sup> Madame de Maintenon writes a great deal on this same subject and private interviews between teacher and pupil were the rule at Saint-Cyr. The subject of these interviews was not school work or lessons, as the modern fashion is; they gave an opportunity of talking to the girl about her character, encouraging her in her difficulties, warning her "gently and reasonably" about her failings, finding out if she had any special vocation.<sup>2)</sup> Madame de Maintenon restricted the number of people who were to hold them to the Superior or the "maîtresse générale" and the first

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<sup>1)</sup> Jacqueline Pascal. Règlement pour les Enfants de Port-Royal.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres .. sur l'éducn. I, p. 171.

mistress of each class, and she advises them to consult one another, so as not to give contradictory advice to the same girl.<sup>1)</sup> She warns them, too, not to undertake any spiritual direction, but to send them to their confessors for that,<sup>2)</sup> and not to encourage grumbling, by a misplaced sympathy,<sup>3)</sup> and, above all, not to force confidences.<sup>4)</sup>

It is clear that, with such restrictions, these interviews would be a most useful means of establishing a personal contact between teacher and pupil, and as such Madame de Maintenon set a high value upon them and recommended them to other schools. This is what she wrote to the Prioress of Biszy in 1713:<sup>5)</sup> "C'est dans le parler en particulier qu'il faut leur dire ce qu'elles sont et leurs obligations; on ne les fâche point quand on leur parle tête à tête, avec raison et douceur, et ces petites conversations sont des plus essentielles pratiques de Saint-Cyr, et ce qui nous a fait le plus de bien."

"Make learning pleasant."

Another educational catchword of to-day is the cry:

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 308.

2) Ibid. I, p. 171, 172.

3) Ibid.

4) Lettres hist. II, p. 170.

5) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 307-308.

"Make learning pleasant", and this too is to be found in the writings of Madame de Maintenon. She preaches cheerfulness to mistresses and girls alike,<sup>1)</sup> and it would seem that she did so to some purpose, for she was able to write in 1715:<sup>2)</sup> "Je ne crois pourtant pas qu'il y ait de jeunesse ensemble qui se divertisse plus que la notre, ni d'éducation plus gaie." It will be remembered how the instructions: "Réjouir leur éducation. Diversifier leurs instructions," form part of her earliest notes on education for Noisy in 1685,<sup>3)</sup> and she insisted on its importance all her life. Nevertheless she does not press the doctrine as far as do some of its modern upholders, for she does not want lessons to be turned into a game,<sup>4)</sup> and she does not see any harm in children finding them dull sometimes, and having to do what they dislike.<sup>5)</sup> This seems to her too obvious to require much comment, and thus it is the other side of which she speaks the most.

#### Recreations.

It is a natural consequence of her doctrine of "making learning pleasant" that she should attach much importance.

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1) Lettres hist. II, p. 88-89.  
Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 83.

2) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 351.

3) Ibid. I, p. 3.

4) Ibid. I, p. 356.

5) Ibid. II, p. 223.

to games and recreations. The value which she set upon the latter for the nuns is shown by the fact that, even when she was old and ill, she always tried to be present at them, and to contribute to the usefulness and pleasure of them.<sup>1)</sup> The useful side was probably uppermost in her mind: a chance remark then would start some discussion which might do more good than a set instruction at a different time.<sup>2)</sup> There must have been many days, however, when the nuns' recreation had no ulterior object but was merely an interval of rest and simple amusements, to which Madame de Maintenon contributed more than anyone else. Madame du Pérou tells of various entertainments she provided for them - such as the band which played outside one day so that they could see what music was like in the army, or the performing animals, the monkey or the elephant "qui faisait quelques gentilleses comme de compter avec son pied tous les nombres qu'on lui nommait" - and the presents she brought them and the lotteries and special recreations she arranged for them.<sup>3)</sup>

The same two elements of usefulness and pleasure are to be found in the girls' recreations. They naturally spent their playtime under the supervision of their class

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1) Mémoires sur M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon. p. 100.....

2) Ibid.

3) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé... ch. 30.

Games.

mistresses, who were charged to correct them then and there if they saw them doing something wrong.<sup>1)</sup> Apart from this, the pupils seem to have been allowed to play much as they liked, indoors or out, according to the season, though rough and noisy games were discouraged.<sup>2)</sup> Thus we find the youngest was playing at houses<sup>3)</sup> - though they were not allowed dolls, for they would have nothing to dress them in, and might be tempted to cut up their own or snip the ends off their ribbons to make them<sup>4)</sup> and at convents,<sup>5)</sup> a natural variation on the first. The elder ones sometimes got up plays or Conversations<sup>6)</sup>, but they were mainly encouraged to play at quiet games, such as chess, draughts, battle-dore and shuttlecock, spillikins, alphabet game, and "trou-madame", a kind of bagatelle.<sup>7)</sup> Cards were forbidden<sup>8)</sup>, though dice were allowed.<sup>9)</sup> Madame de Maintenon was

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1) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>, II, p. 29.

2) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé... ch. 26.  
cp. Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 253.

3) Ibid. II, p. 237.

4) Ibid. II, p. 252-253.

5) Ibid. II, p. 237.

6) Ibid. II, p. 222-223.

7) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé... ch. 26.

8) Ibid.

9) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 234.



especially anxious that they should play games which would teach them to think,<sup>1)</sup> and it was she who provided all those mentioned above, and had a suitable number put in each classroom, not only at Saint-Cyr<sup>2)</sup> but also at its daughter school, Bisy.<sup>3)</sup> When one is tempted to think of the school life at Saint-Cyr as severe and monotonous, it is well to remember the games and recreations there. They are one proof that Madame de Maintenon wanted the girls to be happy and to enjoy their school days.

#### Punishments.

The system of prizes and punishments at Saint-Cyr is another indication that Madame de Maintenon tried to make learning pleasant. The discipline was not harsh, and there seems to have been almost no corporal punishment.<sup>4)</sup> If a girl were a thoroughly bad example to the others and would not submit to punishment or try to improve, she could be sent back to her family and would of course forfeit her dowry.<sup>5)</sup> But the severity even of expulsion was mitigated

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1) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 284.

2) Ibid. I, p. 261.

3) Ibid. II, p. 284.

4) Ibid. I, p. 54.

5) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé..., ch. 29.  
Lettres hist. II, p. 138-9.

by the fact that frequently a younger sister was admitted in place of the culprit, so that her family would not suffer too heavily from her misdeeds. All kinds of means were tried before any girl was sent away, and it was only used as a last resource. Appeal was made first to their reason and attempts were made to win them by gentleness,<sup>1)</sup> and only if it failed was recourse had to severity. Madame de Maintenon advises the nuns to pass over some faults,<sup>2)</sup> to concentrate on the more important ones and not to irritate the girls by pulling them up constantly. They should never punish if they were in a temper themselves, or if the girl were so beside herself that punishment would merely harden her and not bring her to a better way of thinking: in such cases it would be far better to wait.<sup>3)</sup> It seems to have been largely left to the nuns to devise their own punishments - such as exclusion from a treat or less time for talking - for they are warned not to let the girls do anything which will injure their health.<sup>4)</sup> To

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1) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 274.

2) Ibid. I, p. 239.

3) Ibid. I, pp. 79, 170.

4) Ibid, I, p. 205.

sum up, Madame de Maintenon emphasizes first of all the need for gentleness and patience, but if, in spite of them, punishment is necessary, it should be severe, so that it may be final.

#### Prizes.

Besides punishments, there were prizes at Saint-Cyr. Madame de Maintenon believed in competition and the girls always had the stimulus of being moved up from one band or one class to another,<sup>1)</sup> and to add an interest to it Madame de Maintenon often offered a small reward to those who had done well. Thus we find her bringing down rosaries to Rueil<sup>2)</sup> and prizes to Noisy,<sup>3)</sup> and offering a S. Francois de Sales to the girl who knew it best<sup>4)</sup> and sending down prizes to Saint-Cyr.<sup>5)</sup> These prizes seem to have been more or less incidental: no great importance was attached to them, and they were of small value in themselves, but they would give that added incentive to effort which is generally recognised as necessary for young people.

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1) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé...., ch. 26.

2) Corr. Gén. II, p. 233.

3) Ibid. II, p. 387.

4) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 14.

5) Lettres hist. I, p. 35.

"Prefects".

There are other hints, besides those mentioned above, of modern pedagogical methods in the educational system of Madame de Maintenon. For example, the body of elder girls singled out for special duties and privileges are not so very different from the "prefects" of a modern school. These girls, called the "Blacks" from the colour of the ribbon they wore, have been mentioned already,<sup>1)</sup> and it will be remembered that they were about twenty in number, chosen from the two senior classes, and that next to them in importance came eight or ten girls who wore a flame-coloured ribbon and who helped in much the same way as the Blacks. Madame de Maintenon's object in creating these two corps was two-fold:<sup>2)</sup> she both wanted to provide the nuns with helpers for the girls could not be too closely watched over - and she was anxious to give the elder girls some special training which would be of some use to them afterwards, and to vary the routine of their last years at school, when they were apt to grow tired of it and become difficult to manage. On the whole the system worked well from both these points of view. There is no doubt that they were useful

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<sup>1)</sup>Supra. Chap. III, § 8.

<sup>2)</sup>Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé..., ch. 17.

in the classes, where they worked under the orders of the first mistress and where they would practically take the place of a teacher. They also slept in the dormitories of the various classes, where they could give the younger ones the help they needed and take their share in the general supervision.<sup>1)</sup> Sometimes, too, they were sent to help the nuns employed in other parts of the house than the classrooms. Thus they might spend a day working under the direction of the housekeeper or the sacristine, or sewing in the linen room or helping the portress. All of this was a valuable training in household management.<sup>2)</sup> They did not form a class, but they were under the care of the "maitresse generale" herself, who is frequently urged to be diligent in looking after them.<sup>3)</sup>

There was no higher honour for a girl at Saint-Cyr than to be made a "Black", and the position should have been sought for the honour alone and the change of occupation. It carried various small privileges with it: the Blacks were treated like older people and were not corrected or punished in front of the others,<sup>4)</sup> and they were less closely supervised and had permission to go about the house

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 12.

2) Ibid. I, p. 265.

3) Ibid, I, p. 221.

4) Ibid. II, p. 256.

alone.<sup>1)</sup> It was found, however, that this was not enough and that for a while the position was more shunned than coveted. Madame de Maintenon therefore decided that the Blacks were to be given a bigger dowry than the others on leaving school and that various other small marks of honour were to be paid to those whom she called "les filles aînées de Saint-Cyr... l'élite des classes,... le bras droit des Dames de Saint-Louis, leur bâton de vieillesse."<sup>2)</sup>

"Monitorial system".

That Madame de Maintenon believed in singling out girls for special duties and responsibilities is shown by the fact that she not only established the "Blacks", who were more or less school prefects, but also chose several girls in each class to be what we might call the "monitors" of it. It is possible that the idea of this came from the Ursulines, for, though they had no institution quite like it in their boarding schools, the scholars in their charity-schools were divided into groups of ten, with a "dizainiere" at the head of each.<sup>3)</sup> At Saint-Cyr the classes were divided into "bands" of eight or ten girls and over each band were set three of the steadiest people in it as "chief", "assistant"

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 12.

2) Ibid. II, pp. 257, 258.

3) Règlements des Religieuses Ursulines, 2<sup>e</sup> partie.

and "deputy".<sup>1)</sup> Their duties were mainly concerned with giving out books and papers and sewing materials and making a faithful report to their mistress of everything that went on in their band. But they were also employed in the same way as the monitors in the schools of Lancaster and Bell; that is, they taught those who knew less than themselves. One who could read words of one syllable would help another to pick out the letters of the alphabet; one who was far on with her needlework would show her companion how to get on with hers. The system was carried still further in the teaching of the catechism, where the lesson always began by one girl hearing the others what they had learned, no matter whether they were older or younger than she.<sup>2)</sup>

The only disadvantages of the system mentioned by Madame de Maintenon are that the pupil-teachers did not always do their work as thoroughly as they might,<sup>3)</sup> and that the girls were sometimes unwilling to help each other.<sup>4)</sup> Otherwise she has nothing but praise for it and considered it both useful experience for the girls and a help to the

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 13-14.

2) Ibid. II, p. 353.

3) Ibid. II, p. 399.

4) Ibid. II, p. 83.

mistresses, who were thus set free from some of the work of teaching and could devote their attention to the more important task of supervision. She recommends it to the schools who wrote to her for advice,<sup>1)</sup> and she established it in the village school at Avon where she often taught when the court was at Fontainebleau and where "elle choisit six paysannes des plus habiles, qu'elle nommait ses filles; elle en prit un soin encore plus particulier, et apres les avoir bien instruites elle les envoyait instruire les autres."<sup>2)</sup> The likeness to the monitorial system of the nineteenth century is too plain to require comment.

Training of  
teachers.

Lastly, a very modern element in the educational system of Madame de Maintenon was her insistence upon training for her teachers. For this, too, she may have been indebted to the Ursulines, where great importance was attached to it.<sup>3)</sup> It has already been mentioned as part of the ordinary life of the nuns of Saint-Cyr, both before and after the Reform.<sup>4)</sup> Madame de Maintenon did not demand a

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, pp. 319, 333...

2) Haussonville. I. p. 156.

3) Leymont. M<sup>me</sup>. de Saint Beuve et les Ursulines de Paris, ch.

4) Supra. Chap. III, § 4 & 7.



high standard of learning or other qualifications from those who wished to enter the community, but she would reject those who had "une entière incapacité pour les classes".<sup>1)</sup> Before the Reform the novices spent a large part of their noviciate upon their training in teaching. "Elles n'avaient presque point d'autres exercices que ceux des Classes", wrote the Visitandines of them;<sup>2)</sup> "toute leur application était d'étudier et d'apprendre beaucoup de choses par cœur, de copier des livres pour les mieux retenir, de composer des discours de piété etc." Even after the Reform this side of their training was not forgotten, though it no longer received the same exclusive attention. Nor did their training end with their noviciate. They were always encouraged to consult Madame de Maintenon freely,<sup>3)</sup> and it is most unlikely that they used this permission simply for questions of their spiritual life and not also for practical teaching problems. They could also have the benefit of her criticism

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 280.

2) Lettres Circulaires... de Chaillot, 1 juillet, 1698.

3) Lettres. hist. I, p. 53, II. p. 67, etc.

for she spent much time in the classes. This could be most valuable, as the following example will show: it is the opening of a letter to the senior mistress of the Reds (i.e. the youngest class) in 1701.<sup>1)</sup> "J'ai toujours oublié de vous dire ce que j'ai remarqué, il y a plusieurs jours, en vous entendant expliquer l'Evangile; il me paraît que vous embrassiez trop de matières, il en faut peu pour des enfants; vous parlez trop aussi, et je crois qu'il faudrait les faire parler davantage pour voir s'ils entendent et s'ils comprennent. Je trouvais encore que vous étiez trop éloquente; par exemple, vous dites qu'il fallait faire un divorce éternel avec le péché; cela est vrai, et bien dit; mais je ne crois pas qu'il y ait trois filles dans votre classe qui sachent ce que c'est qu'un divorce; soyez simple, et ne songez qu'à vous rendre bien intelligible! Again, they could watch her teaching,<sup>2)</sup> and they could hardly fail to profit by that, for though it is doubtful how much the art of teaching can itself be taught, the importance of a good model is not disputed and in Madame de Maintenon the Ladies of Saint-Louis had one of the best.

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1) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 322.

2) Ibid., I, p. 321, II. p. 11.

5  
 Criticisms  
 adverse to  
 St. Cyr.

The points in the educational system of Madame de Maintenon which have been discussed so far have all been selected for praise and not for blame. It would leave a wrong impression, however, if nothing were said on the other side. Though Saint-Cyr was an admirable school, it had its weak points, and a word must be said about three of its most outstanding failings.

1) Separation  
 from the  
 family.

The first of these has been hinted at already;<sup>1)</sup> it is the entire separation from the family which Madame de Maintenon insisted on for the years of school life. The girls never went home from the day they entered, between the ages of seven and twelve, until they left, at the age of twenty. The lot of Anglo-Indian children seems desirable in comparison. Parents were allowed to visit them only four times a year and then the interview took place in the presence of a chaperone and might only last half an hour. One can sympathise with Madame de Maintenon's desire to be free from interference from the home. One can even sympathise with her conviction that the girls would be better educated by her teachers than by their parents, but she carries her distrust of the family too far, and some-one who could write "en un quart d'heure de conversation

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<sup>1)</sup>Supra. chap. II § 12.

il serait difficile qu'un père jetât un grand poison dans le coeur de sa fille,"<sup>1)</sup> is not setting about training girls for the home in the right way. She is always ready to preach the duties of children towards their parents, but a sense of duty could not take the place of affectionate understanding, and there could be no understanding where the daughters had been so completely separated from their homes for so many years.<sup>2)</sup>

ii) Depressing picture of life in the world.

This is one way in which Madame de Maintenon's methods fell short of her aims. The education given at Saint-Cyr was avowedly a preparation for life in the world, for marriage and the home, yet Madame de Maintenon showed an open distrust of the homes from which the girls came and, more than that, painted the life that awaited them in the world in the darkest colours imaginable.<sup>3)</sup> It would, of course, have been equally false to represent it as a life of pleasure, but she is too sweeping in her condemnation. She dwells exclusively on the dark side of the picture; on the difficulties of marriage,<sup>4)</sup> the scarcity of real

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 203.

<sup>2)</sup>cp. Lettres hist. II, p. 146-7.

<sup>3)</sup>This is the subject of many of the instructions in the 2 vols. of "Conseils aux Demoiselles", cp. I, pp. 2, 25-27, 12-13, 266, etc.

<sup>4)</sup>Conseils I, p. 266.

friendships,<sup>1)</sup> the trials to which a husband can put his wife,<sup>2)</sup> and the illusion of independence.<sup>3)</sup> Whatever state of life they enter, whether married or single, the same future of constraint and dependence awaits them. "Je vous dis que vous obéirez toujours et que l'obéissance des gens du monde est bien plus difficile que celle des religieuses. Si vous y cherchiez de la douceur, je vous dirais, entrez dans un couvent."<sup>4)</sup> It is hardly surprising that so many of her pupils took her advice and that thus Saint-Cyr had less influence on the homes of France than it might have had.

### iii) Conservatism.

The last and most serious charge that can be brought against Saint-Cyr is that of conservatism - not a moderate conservatism born of a respect for the past and an insistence that the new should be definitely proved to be better than the old before ousting it, but a rooted aversion to change of any sort. "A Saint-Cyr, le souvenir du passé tue le présent," said Madame de Maintenon shortly before her death.<sup>5)</sup> Yet she must be held responsible for it more than anyone else. It was she who had inspired those warnings against changes

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1) *Conseils* I, p. 12-13.

2) *Ibid.* I. p. 35.

3) *Ibid.* I, p. 32.

4) *Ibid.* I, p. 32.

5) Quoted by Lavalleyé. ch. 14, p. 287.

with which the Bishop of Chartres prefaced the "Esprit de l'Institut": "Nous conjurons instamment nos successeurs, par le sang que Jésus Christ a versé, de ne permettre jamais que vous vous écartiez d'une ligne de tout ce qui vous est marqué ici comme essentiel à votre institut... Soyez donc à tout jamais inébranlables dans l'esprit de votre institut, fondées et enracinées dans les pratiques qui lui sont propres, comme un édifice sur le fondement et l'arbre dans la racine."<sup>1)</sup> This dislike of change was apparent in the smallest details of the house; the uniform never altered, for dolls were kept as models, so that the same pattern should always be copied.<sup>2)</sup> The letter of Horace Walpole already referred to tells how he visited the classrooms in 1769 and found things much as they had been in 1719. "In the first, the young ladies, who were playing at chess, were ordered to sing to us the choruses of Athaliah; in another, they danced minuets and country dances, while a nun, not quite so able as St. Cecilia, played on a violin. In the others, they acted before us the proverbs or conversations written by Madame de Maintenon for their instruction; for she was not only their foundress but their saint, and

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. I, p. 137.

<sup>2)</sup>Cp. MSS. volume in Bibl. Nat. (fonds fran: 25, 224). "Règlement de St. Cyr." XVII, § 55.

<sup>3)</sup>Letters of H. Walpole to George Montagu, Sept. 17, 1769.

their adoration of her memory has quite eclipsed the Virgin Mary."<sup>1)</sup> In short Saint-Cyr bore the mark of the personality of its foundress so strongly impressed upon it that it was never able to shake itself free and to re-adapt itself to new times and new conditions.

#### Conclusion.

Such then, were a few of the outstanding features, both good and bad, of the educational system of Madame de Maintenon. It is time now to turn to an examination of those schools which took Saint-Cyr for their model. We shall find there appearing again many of those features which we have just discussed.

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<sup>1)</sup> Letters of H. Walpole to George Montagu, Sept. 17, 1769.

# THE EDUCATIONAL TRADITION INHERITED FROM MADAME DE MAINTENON.

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#### IV. THE EDUCATIONAL TRADITION INHERITED FROM MADAME DE MAINTENON.

##### 1. Introduction.

Madame de Maintenon's desire to extend the influence of S. Cyr.

It is clear that Madame de Maintenon always hoped that the reform in girls' education which she inaugurated at Saint Cyr would, in time, penetrate into other schools and that the advantages of the system which she had devised would be reaped by all those who were responsible for the upbringing of girls. In the early days at Noisy she had written to Madame de Brinon: "N'oublions rien pour que notre communauté soit le modèle des autres, non pour en attirer des louanges, mais pour donner envie de les multiplier."<sup>1</sup>) Thirty years later she wrote to her confessor: "Si vous voyiez mon cœur, je crois que vous seriez content du zèle qui y est pour communiquer l'éducation de Saint Cyr."<sup>2</sup>) This desire remained with her all her life: our task now is to consider how far she achieved her aim.

This is an aspect of S. Cyr history which is generally passed over.

Although the idea of the possible influence of her foundation was thus always present to the mind of Madame de Maintenon it has been practically ignored by her biographers and the historians of Saint Cyr. This chapter, therefore,

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<sup>1</sup>) Corr. Gén. II p. 359, avril 1684.

<sup>2</sup>) Le Correspondant. Dec. 1859. Quarante Lettres Inédites de M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon. Foisset. no. 13. 2 oct. 1714

unlike the preceding ones, is really exploring, however cursorily and tentatively, a new corner of this vast field. A starting-point is afforded by the general statements, made by writers on Saint-Cyr, that its influence was felt by other schools, and the sketch, which one at least gives, of its two principal offshoots, Gomerfontaine and Bisy.<sup>1)</sup> But, so far as I know, no attempt has yet been made, in English or French at least, to investigate the subject more closely and to estimate the extent of the influence of Saint-Cyr upon the education of girls.

This account does not claim to be exhaustive.

No doubt the reason why this question is left unanswered by the general historians of Saint-Cyr is that the answer would demand a space out of all proportion to the rest of their work. The more it is examined, the greater does it seem to grow. The direct descendants of Madame de Maintenon's foundation are undoubtedly few, but when we consider the numbers of girls who left Saint-Cyr to enter teaching orders<sup>2)</sup> or the variety of schools, both in France and abroad, whose founders

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1) Lavallée. Chs. 11, p. 234-236, & ch. 15, p. 319-320.  
 cp. also Noailles. III ch. 1, p. 214....  
 cp. his Hist. de St. Cyr.  
 Rousselot. Hist. de l'éduc<sup>n</sup> des femmes en France,  
 ch. 7. § 4.  
 Taphanel. Le théâtre de S. Cyr. ch. 15. and  
 Voltaire. Siècle de Louis XIV... "...cet établissement  
 que presque toutes les nations ont imité."

2) Fleury Vindry. "Les Demoiselles de S. Cyr". This list would form the starting-point for a comprehensive survey.

were more or less consciously imitating Madame de Maintenon, the complexity of the task becomes obvious. The pages which follow, therefore, make no claim to exhaust the subject, though an attempt has been made to select the most outstanding examples of Saint-Cyr influence and at the same time to show in what different ways and in what different schools that influence was felt.

Order to be followed.

Gomerfontaine and Bisy, the "daughters" of Saint-Cyr, naturally come first. They will be followed by an account of the "Institut de l'Enfant Jésus", the creation of Languet de Gergy, Madame de Maintenon's confessor. We shall then turn to convent schools and consider in particular those of the Ursulines and the Visitandines, for a great number of Saint-Cyriennes were received into one or other of those orders. Four or five small schools in France and the great schools of the Legion of Honour will then be studied. The influence of Saint-Cyr, however, was not confined to France, and an important group of foreign schools - those founded by Catherine the Great in Russia - will come up for consideration next. Finally, though Madame de Maintenon seems to have made more appeal to those actually occupied in teaching than to those who wrote about it, two educational theorists at least are indebted to her and a criticism of their work will conclude our review.

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2. Gomerfontaine -  
origins.

Migne's "Dictionnaire des Abbayes et des Monasteres" makes the following brief statement about Gomerfontaine:-  
"Abbaye de femmes de l'ordre de Citeaux, sous l'invocation de la Sainte-Vierge, fondée vers l'an 1207 entre Chaumont et Gisors en Normandie, par Hugues de Chaumont. Elle était du diocèse de Chaumont."<sup>1)</sup> Hugues de Chaumont is thus spoken of here as the founder, in virtue, no doubt, of a paper dated 1209 in which he gave money and lands, including a house and garden at Gomerfontaine, to the Cistercian nuns.<sup>2)</sup> Later, however, to avoid certain payments, these same nuns claimed that the abbey of Gomerfontaine existed before this bequest was made and that it was a mere donation, not an act of foundation. For, from the thirteenth century onwards, the abbesses were engaged in frequent struggles against the neighbouring lords, who preyed upon their lands and put forward illegal claims upon them. On the other hand, the abbey counted all sorts of people, including seven kings, among its benefactors, and it was at the height of its fortune in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thereafter donations grew scarcer and expenses heavier and the poverty of the abbey was increased by the wars in which the country was plunged.

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1) Encyclopédie, III<sup>e</sup> série, Vol. 16.

2) For all the early history of Gomerfontaine cp. Driard et de Maricourt. "Une abbaye de Filles au Dix-Huitième Siècle, Gomerfontaine." Revue des Questions Historiques, 1907, 1<sup>r</sup> avril and 1<sup>r</sup> juillet.

In the 17th  
century.

Some of its past splendour was restored to Gomerfontaine in the first part of the seventeenth century under three abbesses, all members of the same family. Judith de Médavy-Grancey restored the buildings: Madeleine reformed the community and was helped in this work by Agnès Arnauld, who came from Port Royal to pay her a visit about 1617.<sup>1)</sup> Finally, Marguerite de Médavy, sister of Madeleine, improved the house and insisted upon the strict observance of the Cistercian Rule for many years. But she had the misfortune to live too long; she was over a hundred years old when she died in 1705 and she had been abbess since 1628. For many years she had been incapable of ruling or looking after the community at all and thus everything was as bad as it had ever been: the house was falling to pieces, there was no money coming in and, worse than all, the nuns had grown lax in the observance of their rule and were too old to change their ways.

M<sup>me</sup> de la  
Viefville  
abbess.

This was the abbey to which Marie Anne de la Viefville, once a "demoiselle de Saint-Cyr" and a favourite of Madame de Maintenon, was appointed abbess in 1705. She was born

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<sup>1)</sup> It is an interesting coincidence that the last letter preserved of M<sup>me</sup> de la Viefville in the "Lettres et Avis" at the Bibliothèque Nationale is an undated one in which she defends herself against the charge of being in sympathy with the Jansenists.



in 1677<sup>1)</sup> and belonged to an old Flemish family. She had connections among some of the best known families in the kingdom, including the Noailles, and there are frequent references to the Cardinal and other members of the family visiting Gomerfontaine or contributing to it.<sup>2)</sup> On leaving Saint-Cyr she had entered a community of Bernardines at Argensol,<sup>3)</sup> and thence she went to Gomerfontaine where she was abbess at the age of twenty-eight, an office which she retained until her death in 1751.

Her character.

It is difficult to form any clear idea of the personality of Madame de la Vieffville from the Gomerfontaine letters. The note to the "Lettres et Avis"<sup>4)</sup> speaks of her "vertu et piété" - qualities which might almost be taken for granted

1) For dates cp. Fleury Vindry. Les Demoiselles de St. Cyr, under the name of Marie-Anne de la Vieffville-Bouvilliers.

2) Arch. dép. de l'Oise. Registres de dépenses de l'abbaye de Gomerfontaine. 1727. Lavallée. Lettres hist. II, p. 208. 17 oct. 1707, etc. Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé..., ch. 28.

3) Note to the "Lettres et Avis" [publ. by Lavallée. Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 118].

4) The "Lettres et Avis" quoted all through this section are those contained in the manuscript volumes of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

i) Lettres manus. de M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon.  
(Fonds français, 15,200 and 15,201.)

ii) Divers Avis aux maîtresses des classes.  
(Fonds français, 11,675.)

in a protegee of Madame de Maintenon. This is how one who has made a special study of the documents relating to Gomerfontaine describes her: "Jeune, active, intelligente, ayant en elle l'incomparable force de ceux qui dirigent patiemment et lentement tous leurs efforts vers un but unique, allant jusqu'à fabriquer elle-même des couchettes de bois pour ses pensionnaires dénuées de tout et à labourer les terres incultes de Gomerfontaine, mettant enfin toute son âme à l'exécution de la mission qui lui était confiée..."<sup>1)</sup> All this is true, but it is perhaps questionable whether "patiemment et lentement" is the best description of the way in which she set to work.

From the Gomerfontaine letters, the chief characteristic of Madame de la Viefville appears to be strength of character: "Il est vrai, ma chère fille",<sup>2)</sup> wrote Madame de Maintenon, "que je vous trouve un peu trop de la sensibilité des jeunes personnes qui veulent fortement ce qu'elles veulent." This same strong will leads her to various excesses: she is too quick by nature and has to learn to keep herself in check.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) Briard et de Maricourt, op. cit.

2) Divers avis, No. 39. 23 nov., 1706.

3) Ibid. No. 65. 23 juin, 1708.

she is so anxious to waste nothing that she is inclined to be niggardly:<sup>1)</sup> and she overworks to such an extent that she falls ill. In 1706 Madame de Maintenon wrote to her:<sup>2)</sup> "Votre indisposition est un effet de votre zèle; vous travaillez trop, vous ne dormez pas assez. Monsieur Fagon n'a point de remèdes contre une telle conduite", but she would not be warned and the next year she was ill a second time, again from overwork, which Madame de Maintenon describes thus:<sup>3)</sup> "Vous avez mis votre sang en un tel mouvement qu'il ne circulait plus."

Madame de Maintenon finds fault with her for other reasons besides working too much. The most serious differend<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Divers avis, No. 49. 17 avril, 1707. "Je suis très contente des assurances que M. de la Place m'a données que vous ne faites que des réparations nécessaires dans votre maison sans aucun ajustement... Je souhaite seulement que ce soit par un esprit religieux et non point par avarice."

Et No. 53. 17 Oct., 1707. "Dieu vous garde d'être avare, c'est un péché mortel... mais je serais bien fâchée que vous ne fussiez pas ménagère."

<sup>2)</sup> Ibid. No. 30. 12 avril, 1706.

<sup>3)</sup> Ibid. No. 54. 18 juin, 1707.

<sup>4)</sup> Lettres manus. II. p. 44, 22 Nov., 1705. "Je ne prétends pas vous avoir fait un présent de Mlle. d'Aumale."

p.51, 20 déc., 1705. "Ce que vous m'avez écrit sur d'Aumale ne m'a point fâchée mais il ne m'a point persuadé: nous avons besoin d'elle."

p.55, 20 jan., 1706. "Je vous ai priée positivement de nous envoyer Mlle. d'Aumale."

24 jan., 1706. "Vous ne me parlez plus de Mlle. d'Aumale. C'est tout de bon que je suis mal contente de vous là-dessus."

between them arose over Mademoiselle d'Aumale, whom Madame de Maintenon had sent to Comberfontaine to help for a short time and whom the abbess kept too long. She also shewed the letters<sup>1)</sup> she had received from Madame de Maintenon, although she had been specially asked not to do so.<sup>2)</sup> Finally, she is blamed for writing ceremoniously<sup>3)</sup> and for neglecting for a long time to give Madame de Maintenon an address<sup>4)</sup> to which to send her letters. All these were trifling affairs, however, and did not prevent the two from working together to make of Comberfontaine a second Saint-Cyr.<sup>5)</sup>

The condition  
of the abbey  
on her ap-  
pointment.

In spite of the efforts of Mesdames de Medavi in the seventeenth century, a great deal remained for Madame de la Viefville to reform.<sup>6)</sup> The house was pleasantly situated

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1) Lettres manus. II. p. 53. 19 jan., 1706.

2) Divers Avis, No. 16. 6 jan., 1705... "que mes lettres ne soient point vues car on se moquerait de moi."

3) Lettres manus. II, p. 53. 19 jan., 1706.

4) Lettres manus. Vol. II, p. 44, 15 nov., 1705. "Pour-quoi ne me pas dire précisément si je les dois adresser ou à Magny ou à Gisors ou à Chaumont ou à Beaumont", and p. 46, 17 nov., 1705: "Je ne vous écris plus que vous ne m'avez envoyé une adresse".

5) Ibid., p. 31. 5 oct., 1705: "Comptez que votre maison devient pour moi un second S. Cyr ou j'espère que Dieu sera tous les jours mieux servi."

6) A description of the house and a print are given in the "Mémoires de la Société Académique d'Archéologie de l'Oise, t. V, p. 581. "Quelques mots sur l'Abbaye de Comberfontaine", l'Abbé Barraud. I am also indebted to M. le baron A. de Maricourt for his kindness in lending me the manuscript of his lectures (unpublished) on "Un couvent au dix-huitième siècle, L'Abbaye de Comberfontaine."

on rising ground close to a stream well stocked with fish, near Gisors, on the road from Chaumont to Trie. The buildings were roomy and there was a large garden with well-grown hedges, but everything was in need of repair: "Je suis sûre que vous aimeriez mieux jeûner au pain ou à l'eau que de voir votre maison si délabrée qu'elle ne l'est",<sup>1)</sup> wrote Madame de Maintenon.

The accounts<sup>2)</sup> for the abbess' first year of office show that the debts amounted to over thirteen thousand livres. There follows this note: "Outre toutes ces dettes réelles dont l'abbaye était chargée, Madame de la Vieville ayant trouvé la maison dépourvue de meubles, de linge et de toutes les provisions nécessaires pour l'entretien et la nourriture tant de la communauté que des domestiques, comme aussi de tous les grains dont on avait besoin pour la nourriture des bestiaux et pour ensemençer les terres, elle a été obligée en entrant dans l'abbaye de faire une dépense d'environ 2,000 l. pour les plus pressants besoins." Thus Madame de la Vieville found herself surrounded with difficulties from the first.

The internal affairs were in even a worse condition than the buildings. In the convent there was no regularity

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1) Divers Avis, No. 46. 11 fév., 1707.

2) Archives de l'Orléans. Beauvais. Comptes Généraux de l'Abbaye de Comberfontaine.

i) buildings  
dilapidated

ii) community  
in need of  
reform.

at all;<sup>1)</sup> the nuns were old and unaccustomed to any interference from their abbess<sup>2)</sup> and consequently averse to any change and difficult to deal with.<sup>3)</sup> Besides the nuns the convent housed several lady boarders, as did so many others at that time.<sup>4)</sup> The conditions on which they were received varied in different places, but they always disturbed the peace of the community, for only a small minority were women anxious to retire from the world, though unable for some reason to take vows in any order. The convent was the natural refuge for wives separated from their husbands, and at Comerfontaine itself there was a suggestion<sup>5)</sup> that lodging should be given to Mademoiselle de Séry, when the duc d'Orléans had tired of her. This, then, was the household which Madame de Vieville was called upon to govern, and it was no small task for an abbess twenty-eight years old.

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1) Divers Avis No. 36, 12 août, 1706: "Je suis très-fâchée du désordre qui est chez vous."

2) Ibid. No. 43. 11 fév., 1707... "vous avez des filles fort entêtées de leurs premières coutumes".

3) Lettres manus. II, p. 44, 15 nov. 1705, where *Mme* de Maintenon says in fun: "J'ai proposé aux dames de S. Louis la consultation que vous me faites pour désirer la mort de vos vieilles. On a répondu qu'il faut en conscience les supporter, et je crois que vous vous en doutiez bien."

4) For examples of behaviour of these "Dames Pensionnaires" cp. Luppé: "Les jeunes filles dans l'aristocratie et la bourgeoisie à la fin du 18 siècle." Ch. 4, § 4.

And Hardy. Histoire de la Congrégation des Ursulines de Tonnerre. 1627-1905.

5) Geffroy. II, p. 242. Lettre à *Mme* de Vieville 16. 1. (1710).

On her appointment M<sup>me</sup> de Viefville applies at once to M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon for help and advice.

The note to the Lettres et Avis tells how she set to work:<sup>1)</sup> "La première chose qu'elle fit fut de venir demander à Madame de Maintenon l'honneur de sa protection, et de prendre ses avis pour bien gouverner sa maison. Madame de Maintenon fut si touchée de sa vertu, de sa piété et de ses bonnes intentions pour rétablir dans son Abaye la régularité, qui y avait souffert de grandes atteintes pendant les dernières années de l'abbesse précédente, qu'elle résolut de l'aider en tout ce qu'elle pouvait." It was natural that she should turn to Madame de Maintenon: it is still more natural that Madame de Maintenon should respond, even though we may not agree with Saint-Simon<sup>2)</sup> that "elle se croyait l'abbesse universelle: c'était la son occupation favorite." She loved managing, organising and giving advice, and she wanted to spread the benefits of the education of Saint-Cyr. She spared herself no trouble over Comerfontaine<sup>3)</sup> and added yet one more occupation to a day already full to overflowing, but she did not want to lay down the law about what ought to be done, nor expect that her advice would always be followed.

1) Quoted by Lavallée. Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. II, p. 118.

2) S. Simon, vol. XII, p. 103.

3) Lettres hist. II, p. 192, 14 oct. 1706... "mon commerce en Espagne et la surcharge de Comerfontaine me prend bien du temps".

"Je vous dis ce que je pense, mais je ne prétends pas vous gêner", she wrote in 1705;<sup>1)</sup> and again, in 1707<sup>2)</sup> "Je vous trouve trop soumise à mes conseils; j'aimerais mieux que vous me disiez vos raisons et même que vous disputassiez un peu; je ne veux point vous tyrannizer."

M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon  
sends her  
i) Mademoiselle  
d'Aunale.

Though unwilling to "tyrannise", Madame de Maintenon was quite ready to help,<sup>3)</sup> and in a note to the "Comptes Généraux" the abbess describes what practical form this help took. "Madame de Maintenon", she wrote, "qui m'a toujours fait l'honneur de me regarder comme sa fille depuis que j'ai eu celui d'être élevée dans la Maison royale de Saint-Louis à Saint-Cyr m'a aussi donné des marques d'une bonté singulière, m'aidant au-delà de tout ce que j'aurais pu désirer pour le rétablissement spirituel et temporel de l'abbaye par ses sages conseils, par des demoiselles élevées dans la maison de Saint-Louis qu'elle m'a données pour être religieuses, par de grosses sommes d'argent, beaucoup de meubles, et en nous donnant un grand nombre de pensionnaires dont elle paye largement les pensions, enfin par une puissante protection dans toutes les affaires où nous en avons besoin, et par une

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1) Lettres manus. II, p. 49. 14 déc., 1705.

2) Divers avis, No. 43 5 jan., 1707.

3) cp. Note to Lettres et Avis.



suite de toutes ces bontés elle m'a honorée d'une distinction qu'elle n'accorde à personne, en me faisant entrer dans sa maison de Saint-Louis afin de me préparer a ma bénédiction par une retraite de dix jours."<sup>1)</sup> Advice, helpers, money, furniture, pupils, protection: those are some of the kinds of help to which Madame de la Vieffville refers. Let us examine in greater detail what Madame de Maintenon actually did.

Her first act was to send off her own secretary, Mademoiselle d'Aumale, both to advise Madame de la Vieffville and to show her how to organise the school on the lines of Saint-Cyr. Mademoiselle d'Aumale had been at Saint-Cyr herself and had taught there afterwards, so she was well fitted to the task, and she found a great deal to do. In her spare time she gave the abbess a few lessons in spelling,<sup>2)</sup> which was a weak point with her, and when she returned to Madame de Maintenon she gave her a report of how everything was going at the abbey.<sup>3)</sup> After this first visit she went again from

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<sup>1)</sup> Archives de l'Oise, Beauvais. Comptes Généraux de l'Abbaye de Gomerfontaine.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres manus. II, p. 37. 24 oct. 1705. "Vous écrivez fort bien mais vous mettez assez mal l'Orthographe; je voudrais que d'Aumale vous donnât quelques leçons là-dessus, si vous en avez le loisir." The abbess must have profited by the lessons, for in August, 1706, M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon writes: "Votre orthographe serait parfaite si vouliez bien distinguer le masculin et le féminin." (Lettres et Avis, No. 37. 31 août, 1706.)

<sup>3)</sup> Divers avis, No. 53. 11 June, 1707.

time to time, but not for so long and probably more as a visitor than as a mistress.

ii) Several girls from S. Cyr.

Along with Mademoiselle d'Aumale, Madame de Maintenon sent several girls<sup>1)</sup> to carry the principles of Saint-Cyr education into the abbey school. Some of the girls thus sent remained at Gomerfontaine or went back to it, and eventually took vows there, but they were not necessarily meant to become novices but to serve as models and leaders for the classes. Madame de Maintenon is always glad to get news of them afterwards<sup>2)</sup> and to give them instructions, which can really be summed up as an exhortation to imitate the essentials of the educational system of Saint-Cyr: to be adaptable; not to be shocked at the differences they would find at Gomerfontaine, and to be a credit to the education they had received. This is what she says in a letter of advice to them.<sup>3)</sup> "Attachez-vous fortement aux choses

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1) The following girls are mentioned by name in the Gomerfontaine letters:- Mlles. de Beloi, de Blezel,<sup>x</sup> de Champlebon,<sup>x</sup> de Châteautiery, de Chaunac, de Franlieu, de Fréminville, de la Gattine,<sup>x</sup> de Mareuil, de Martinville, de Montchevreuil, de Finard, de Saint-Laurent,<sup>x</sup> de la Vieffville (x= mentioned in the list of Fleury-Vindry as having taken vows at Gomerfontaine.)

2) When M. Treil, one of the S.Cyr confessors, who was sent to Gomerfontaine, comes back, M<sup>te</sup> de Maintenon writes: "Il m'a dépeint la Vieffville incarnate et blanche, Blezel avec un visage fort large, Champlebon un peu pale et toutes ferventes." Lettres et Avis, No. 79, 7 juillet (1706 ou 1709).

3) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 120. Sep. 1705.

essentielles... et ne vous amusez point à mille petites choses indifférentes, que nous avons établies ici pour faciliter le gouvernement d'un si grand nombre d'enfants à la fois." Or again, writing to the abbess about them, she says.<sup>1)</sup> "... les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr ne peuvent me plaire qu'en honorant et respectant vos Religieuses et ne se scandalisant pas de ce qui leur est nouveau. Elles sont un peu sujettes à juger de tout sur Saint-Cyr, et vous savez, Madame, que chaque maison a ses manières."

Though she hoped that the girls sent thus from Saint-Cyr would be of great use at Gomerfontaine in establishing the school upon the right lines, Madame de Maintenon was quite aware of the dangers of their position, both for themselves and for the community. She therefore warns them about these, too. The danger for their own character was that Madame de la Vieville would spoil them by making favourites of them<sup>2)</sup> and that they on their side would become too fond of her.<sup>3)</sup> For the community there was the risk that they would excite the jealousy of the old nuns<sup>4)</sup> and cause a

1) Lettres manus. II, p. 29, 11 oct., 1705.

2) Divers Avis, no. 61. 21 déc., 1707. "Il faut plus aimer les anciennes et un peu moins les demoiselles de Saint-Cyr."

3) Lettres manus. II, p. 53. 31 déc., 1705, and p. 55, 7 fév., 1706, warning her that the S. Cyriennes are entering her community through affection for her and not from any real vocation.

4) Ibid., p. 29, 11 oct., 1705, willing to send help from S. Cyr as the abbess assures her there is no jealousy.

division between old and young.<sup>1)</sup> Madame de Maintenon therefore insists that they should not be treated as favourites at all and that they should be<sup>2)</sup> sent away at once if they are not satisfactory. We do not know if this ever happened, but some of them were all that could be desired, and it is interesting to find, in 1776, a notice of the death of one of them, Emilie de la Gastine, where she is called "l'intéressant modèle des vertus religieuses et des qualités sociales... Un ange par la piété et un sujet précieux par l'esprit et les talents et l'aménité de son caractère."<sup>3)</sup>

111) money.

Besides helpers Madame de Maintenon also sent money. In a letter dated 17th October, 1705<sup>4)</sup> she mentions that she has ready for them three hundred francs from herself, six hundred from the family of the Noailles and four hundred from the King. Next year she is busy<sup>5)</sup> arranging for them to profit by the seven thousand francs she has collected for them, and there are other references elsewhere to her gifts to the community. It is characteristic of her businesslike nature that she should say to the abbess<sup>6)</sup> "Vous ne pouvez jamais vous

1) Divers Avis No. 68, 3 juillet, 1708. "J'ai vu plus d'une fois dans vos lettres en parlant de vos filles: Elle n'est point de mon parti. Une supérieure a-t-elle un parti?"

2) Lettres manus. II, p. 37, 24 Oct., 1705. "Renvoyez les demoiselles de S. Cyr quand vous ne croyez point qu'elles seront de bonnes Bernardines."

3) Registres de l'abbaye de Comberfontaine. Quoted by M. de Maricourt in "Un couvent au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle".

4) Lettres manus. II, p. 35.

5) Divers avis, no. 29. 21 mars, 1706.

6) Lettres manus. II, p. 44. 22 nov. 1705.

donner entièrement au gouvernement spirituel: il faudra toujours que vous vous mêliez du temporel", though at the same time she always puts first things first.

iv) advice.  
A. about the  
community.

Win over the  
old nuns.

Of more importance than either money or helpers were the letters of advice which Madame de Maintenon addressed to the abbess. She wrote to her about both the community and the school. There were two distinct sections in the community, as we have seen, the old nuns and the young, and the aim of Madame de la Vieville and Madame de Maintenon was to reform the abuses and irregularities which had crept in. Madame de Maintenon is insistent that, in order to achieve this, the abbess must begin by gaining the affections of the older nuns - "il faut chercher à se faire aimer et ne vouloir être aimée que pour les porter à Dieu."<sup>1)</sup> For herself, she does all she can to win their favour, and her letters<sup>2)</sup> to them, unlike those to the Ladies of St. Louis, are full of praise and have no word of blame, though her letters to the abbess show that she found the nuns far from perfect. She instructs the helpers from Saint-Cyr, too, to honour and respect them<sup>3)</sup> and she advises

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1) Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 125. 5 déc., 1705.

2) Lettres manus. II, p. 35. 14 oct., 1705.

3) Ibid. p. 29. 11 oct., 1705. "Les demoiselles de St Cyr ne peuvent me plaire qu'en honorant et respectant vos religieuses." cp. Lettres et Avis, No. 79. 7 juillet (1706 ou 1709). "Je les prie (i.e. les anciennes) d'aimer les demoiselles de St Cyr comme leurs enfants, et que les enfants les honorent et les respectent."

the abbess to use them as far as possible for the posts of responsibility<sup>1)</sup> in the house, setting a young nun to help them if necessary.

Train the  
young nuns.

Madame de Maintenon did not really expect the abbess to be able to do much with the older section of her community: her real hope was in the younger ones.<sup>2)</sup> She therefore emphasises the importance of choosing suitable candidates for admission<sup>3)</sup> and of training them carefully.<sup>4)</sup> She evidently considers that in some ways a good novice mistress<sup>5)</sup> is of more importance for the well-being of the community than the superior herself. It may be impossible to make the old change habits to which they have once grown accustomed,<sup>6)</sup> but it is essential to bring up the young according to the rule which

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1) Divers Avis, No. 40, 20 déc., 1706. "J'aimerais mieux qu'une charge fut un peu plus mal faite que de fâcher mes anciennes religieuses." cp. no. 81. 6 août, 1709. "L'ancienne ordonnera et la jeune sera chargée de ce qu'il y aura de pénible."

2) ibid. no. 39. 23 nov. 1706. "Je ne crois pas que vous deviez entreprendre de redresser l'esprit de vos anciennes religieuses: il est trop tard, mais il faudrait élever les jeunes avec un bon esprit."

3) Divers Avis, no. 45. 15 jan., 1707.

4) ibid. no. 46. 11 fév., 1707. "Vous devez avoir un grand soin de votre noviciat."

5) ibid. No. 68. 3 juillet, 1708. (Quoted Ch. III, p. 48, note 1.)

6) e.g. in the matter of fasting. Mme de Maintenon, on the authority of the Cardinal de Noailles, to allow the old ones to keep to their relaxed rule, but says that she and the younger ones should adopt the stricter usages she had introduced at Argensolles. cp. Lettres manus. II, p. 43. 5 nov., 1705.

she wishes to establish. The abbess would have liked to have had a noviciate composed entirely of girls from Saint-Cyr,<sup>1)</sup> but this was not possible, though a good many Saint-Cyriennes<sup>2)</sup> took vows at Gomerfontaine.

- in order  
to reform the  
community.

The whole object of thus winning over the old and training the young was to reform the community. It is not possible to say how lax it had grown<sup>3)</sup> in the observance of its vows, but Madame de Maintenon recommends the abbess to prevent her nuns from seeing men,<sup>4)</sup> or visiting their friends too often in the parlour: to open their letters, censor the books they read<sup>5)</sup> and make a reliable nun portress.<sup>6)</sup> She is especially anxious to rid the house of the presence of the lady boarders:

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1) Lettres Manus. II, p. 46. 17 nov., 1705.

2) The list given by Fleury-Vindry "Les Demoiselles de S. Cyr mentions eight by name. cp. "Quarante Lettres Inédites de M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon." (Foisset. Le Correspondant. Déc., 1859.) No. 38.

3) Examples of the laxity of certain convents in the 16th and 17th centuries are given in Leymont. "M<sup>me</sup> de Sainte-Beuve et les Ursulines de Paris". Introduction. At Maubuisson the abbess conducted the nuns, on fine days, to a certain spot on the Paris road where they danced with the monks of S. Martin de Pontoise.

4) Divers Avis, no. 39. 23 nov., 1706. cp. no. 37. 31 août, 1706.... "soyez très ferme à vous opposer aux entrées (i.e. des hommes), rendez les parloirs les plus désagréables que vous pourrez, voyez toutes les lettres qui entrent et qui sortent."

5) ibid. no. 40. 20 déc., 1706.

6) ibid.

"Vous avez de la peine à faire une maison régulière avec de grandes pensionnaires",<sup>1)</sup> she wrote in 1706, but she does not seem to have had her way in this respect,<sup>2)</sup> probably because they were an important source of income.<sup>3)</sup>

Importance for  
this of

a) recrea-  
tions

All these measures were of a more or less preventive nature, but Madame de Maintenon had also two more positive suggestions to offer. The first was to assign to the recreations the same place as they had at Saint-Cyr. "Si j'ai fait du bien à Saint-Cyr, c'est par l'assiduité que j'ai eue à leurs récréations; c'est là qu'on se fait aimer par la complaisance, c'est là qu'on les connaît et qu'on les réjouit, c'est là où on jette quelque chose de bon en passant qui fait plus d'impression que ce que l'on dit dans les exhortations:<sup>4)</sup> "Je vous dirai toujours les memes choses sur les récréations. C'est un des plus grands biens qu'on puisse établir dans une

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1) Lettres manus., p. 55. 7 fév., 1706.

2) The question of admitting M<sup>me</sup> de Barneval and the abbess' own mother and sister is often discussed. cp. Lettres et Avis, nos. 33 (25 mai, 1706), 51 (1<sup>er</sup> mai, 1707), 53 (11 juin, 1707), 83 (3 sep., 1709), etc.

3) cp. Hardy. Histoire de la Congrég<sup>n</sup> des Ursulines de Tonnerre. A lady is sent away because she is such a nuisance to the community. Soon after she offers 225 livres a year for her rooms and increases the offer to 300.

4) Lettres manus. II, p. 56. 23 fév., 1706.



communauté.<sup>1)</sup> It appears from a later letter<sup>2)</sup> that the abbess followed this advice, though she introduced the change gradually.

b) good  
confessors.

The other measure advocated by Madame de Maintenon as of the first importance for the regularity of the community was to find for it suitable confessors. There should be a real co-operation<sup>3)</sup> between them and the superior, to whom they should refer their penitents<sup>4)</sup> for any question connected with the rule of the community. Madame de Maintenon takes a great deal of trouble in looking for a suitable priest for them.<sup>5)</sup> She recommends, among others, the abbé Treil,<sup>6)</sup> who was one of the confessors at Saint-Cyr and who went to Gomerfontaine and was delighted with everything he found there. We do not know whether he went back there again, for the abbess was apt to make too frequent changes<sup>7)</sup> in the spiritual direction of her house.

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1) Lettres manus II, p. 57. 4 (ou 9) mars, 1706.

2) Divers Avis, no. 58. 17 oct., 1707.

3) ibid., no. 46. 11 fév., 1707.

4) ibid., no. 41. 3 jan., 1707.

5) Lettres manus. II, p. 31. 5 oct., 1705.

6) Divers Avis, no. 60. 7 déc., 1707.

7) Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup>, II, p. 285, jan. 1713.  
"Notre abbessse..... change si souvent de confesseur."

Advice to  
set up  
Councils as  
at S. Cyr.

Another piece of advice about the community which Madame de Maintenon gives to Madame de la Vieville, also based upon her experience at Saint-Cyr, is to make a Council composed of the older nuns, to discuss affairs of internal management, like the Conseil du Dedans at Saint-Cyr. She ought also to have a few people to help her with the business affairs of the community. "Il faut vous faire quelque conseil de votre confesseur, s'il est capable, et de quelque honnête homme de votre voisinage," she wrote in 1705:<sup>1)</sup> "N'en aurez-vous pas un dans le dedans pour les petites affaires de la maison, composée des plus Anciennes, vous réservant pourtant toujours la liberté de la décision?" In this matter too the abbess followed her advice.<sup>2)</sup>

B. about the  
school.

Pupils at  
Gomerfontaine  
different  
from those  
at S. Cyr.

As Madame de Maintenon pointed out to the girls whom she sent there from Saint-Cyr, the conditions in the school at Gomerfontaine were very different from those to which they were accustomed. At Saint-Cyr all the girls were of noble birth, and all the education was free: hence, the school was under no obligation whatever towards the parents, from whom, moreover, the girls were almost entirely separated for the

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettres manus., p. 33. 14 oct., 1705.

<sup>2)</sup>ibid., p. 37. 24 oct., 1705. "Je suis ravie de ce que vous voulez bien demander conseil."

whole of their school life. At Gomerfontaine the pupils had to pay fees;<sup>1)</sup> They were not so remote from their families;<sup>2)</sup> They did not stay at school as long<sup>3)</sup> and, socially, they were of different classes. Among those mentioned there is a Mademoiselle de Sermoise,<sup>4)</sup> sister of the Mademoiselle de Séry whose liaison with the Duc d'Orléans was a matter of common talk.<sup>5)</sup> There were also two demoiselles de Barneval,<sup>6)</sup> daughters of a French mother but an Irish father and so ineligible for admission into Saint-Cyr. There were a good many bourgeois and two farmers' daughters,<sup>7)</sup> besides a foundling<sup>8)</sup> who had been left on the roadside where Madame de Maintenon would find her, of whom nothing more was known than her age and that she had been baptised.

1) give them an education fitted to their condition.

The advice which Madame de Maintenon stresses the most in

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1) Lettres manus. II, p. 42. 2 nov., 1705. "Ne prenez pas trop de pensionnaires ni à trop bon marché."

2) e.g. M<sup>me</sup> de Barneval was a boarder in the house for some time while her girls were at school there. Lettres et Avis, no. 33. 25 mai, 1706.

3) Lettres.. sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 296. 9 avril, 1713.

4) cp. Divers Avis No. 54. 18 juin, 1707.

5) Dangeau. Journal. 10 mai, 1696.

6) Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé.. ch. 27.

7) Lettres.. sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 352. jan. 1715. (Note des "Lettres et Avis".)

8) ibid. p. 125. 5 dec. 1705. (Note des Lettres et Avis.)

regard to their education is that it should be fitted to their sphere of life. It is difficult to see how this would work out in practice, but in theory it was not intended to make any one class feel superior to the rest,<sup>1)</sup> either on the score of birth or of wealth. The difference, however, existed between them and Madame de Maintenon wanted them to be trained for different duties in after life. "Il faut élever vos bourgeoises en bourgeoises", she writes,<sup>2)</sup> "il ne leur faut ni vers ni conversations; il n'est point question de leur orner l'esprit. Il faut leur prêcher les devoirs de la famille." This difference in the kind of education which Madame de Maintenon would give to the various classes of the pupils should be borne in mind in any discussion of the life of the school at Gomerfontaine.

2) advice on their instruction.

a) Religious.

Comparatively little is said about the actual instruction given at Gomerfontaine. As at Saint-Cyr, the essential part of education was training in "la solide piété",<sup>3)</sup> as the basis

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1) Divers Avis. no 39. 23 nov., 1706. "Il faut dire bien doucement à vos bourgeoises que si les choses étaient dans l'ordre elles seraient femmes de chambre de ces pauvres Demoiselles. Il faut dire aux Demoiselles qu'il faut être les plus humbles de la maison et baiser les pieds de ces bourgeoises avec joie."

2) Lettres.. sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 293. 9 avril, 1713.

3) ibid., p. 295. same letter.

of everything else. Religious instruction, therefore, comes first in importance. The girls were to be taught the catechism "bien expliqué et appliqué à leur état",<sup>1)</sup> and Madame de Maintenon also offers to send them a book of explanations<sup>2)</sup> of the Gospel for every Sunday in the year - perhaps the same as that which the abbe Gobelin had written for Saint-Cyr in its early days. No secular instruction is mentioned beyond reading, writing and arithmetic,<sup>3)</sup> but this does not necessarily mean that nothing else was taught. Finally, the girls were taught the usual kinds of domestic work and sewing, but Madame de Maintenon counts it of less importance for them than their general education, for she writes:<sup>4)</sup> "Vous faites parfaitement d'exiger de vos petites filles de travailler pour la maison, pourvu que vous ayez la bonne foi de préférer encore l'éducation au travail." It is unlikely that the girls' help was needed in the house, as we hear both of lay sisters<sup>5)</sup> and servants<sup>6)</sup> who would do the work.

b) secular

c) domestic

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1) Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 296. 9 avril, 1713.

2) Lettres manus. II, p. 51. 20 déc., 1705.

3) Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 296.

4) *ibid.*, p. 294. mars., 1713.

5) Lettres manus. II, p. 40. 30.oct., 1705.

6) Divers Avis, no. 79. 7 juillet, 1706 (ou 1709) "Notre saint prêtre est content de vos soeurs converses et jusqu'aux servantes".

but Madame de la Vieffville wanted them to be properly taught various kinds of handwork and called in a nun<sup>1)</sup> from another convent to teach them some craft she did not know herself.

d) Acting and music.

Outside the regular curriculum, Madame de la Vieffville was anxious for her pupils to act, as they did at Saint-Cyr, and to learn music. Neither of these schemes met with Madame de Maintenon's approbation. She considered that the "Conversations" would be a waste of time<sup>2)</sup> at Gomerfontaine, though they had their uses at Saint-Cyr, both to amuse the girls in their recreations and to teach them something about behaviour in society. At first, however, she had conceded that they might be useful in helping to form the girls' reason,<sup>3)</sup> and in the early days she seems even to have encouraged plays, if we may judge by what she wrote in 1709: "J'ai chargé Mademoiselle d'Aumale de vous écrire sur la représentation de nos pièces saintes."<sup>4)</sup> Her opposition to music is even more marked. She wrote in 1705:<sup>5)</sup> "Je crains bien,

1) Lettres manus. II, p. 33. 14 oct., 1705. "Je ne sais si la fille que vous voudriez faire venir de Maubuisson est pour vous apprendre à faire des Clerges ou des Serges."

2) Lettres... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 296. 9 avril, 1713. "Il ne leur faut ni vers ni conversations."

3) Ibid. p. 294. mars., 1713. "Votre confesseur est bien content des Conversations: elles peuvent vous aider à former la raison des enfants."

4) Divers Avis, No. 73. 20. fév., 1709.

5) Lettres manus. II, p. 47. 28 nov., 1705.

ma chère, que vous ne donniez dans l'Ecueil du chant dont aucunes religieuses presque ne se sauve [sic]<sup>1)</sup>: she points out all the difficulties<sup>1)</sup> of expense and of finding a suitable organist and the dangers of receiving into the community someone who had a voice though little vocation and "de faire de son Eglise un opéra... ou s'exposer à la moquerie si on ne réussit pas.<sup>1)</sup> Nevertheless, the abbess is insistent and Madame de Maintenon, seeing she cannot dissuade her, resigns herself to what she considers the second best and tries to find<sup>2)</sup> for her as organist some girl who knows how to play and who could teach the others.<sup>3)</sup> The post thus created by Madame de la Vieville was never allowed to lapse, and one of the people mentioned by name when the Inventory was taken just before Comberfontaine was closed in 1790 was "Marie Magdelaine Elisabeth Fortunée Lottin, âgée d'environ dix-huit ans,... attachée à laditte abbaye en qualité d'organiste."<sup>4)</sup>

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1) Lettres manus. II, p. 47. 28 nov., 1705.

2) Ibid. II, p. 53. 31 dec., 1705.  
Divers Avis, no .21. 6 jan., 1705.

3) This question of music really concerns the community rather than the school, but certainly some of the girls learnt as M<sup>re</sup> de Maintenon write on Feb. 5, 1706 (Divers Avis no. 26) that the organist would teach "ensuite aux autres et à votre petite Favorite." [Note: M<sup>lle</sup> de Sermoise.]

4) Archives de l'Oise, Beauvais, série  $\phi^h$ .  
Etat de l'Abbaye au moment où éclata la Révolution.

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### 3. Care of their health.

The question of the physical well-being of the girls is also discussed by Madame de Maintenon. In dress she does not consider a uniform essential,<sup>1)</sup> though Madame de la Vieville would like it,<sup>2)</sup> but she wants them to be dressed economically and sensibly and to have the inevitable "corps"<sup>3)</sup> well fitting for the sake of their development, so she made arrangements for the Saint-Cyr tailor<sup>4)</sup> to be sent down to Gomerfontaine once a year to make the clothes. She shows her interest in what the girls have to eat, for she writes to the abbess in 1707: "Si la nourriture que vous me marquez est suffisante en quantité et un peu bien accommodée vos filles en ont assez."<sup>5)</sup> Their sleeping arrangements also come in for comment, when she urges Madame de la Vieville<sup>6)</sup> not to accept more girls than she has beds for, as they ought to have one each.

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1) Lettres., sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 355. juin 1715. Inspirer "le solide de l'éduc<sup>n</sup> de S. Cyr.... on ne peut pas... toujours... les habiller d'un habit uniforme."

2) Lettres mams. II, p. 47. 28 nov., 1705. "Je souhaite que les parents de vos pensionnaires consentent à l'habit uniforme que vous voulez leur donner."

3) *ibid.*... "des corps bien faits pour préserver leur taille."

4) Divers Avis, no. 43. 5 jan., 1707. "Je propose à Mlle. d'Aumale de savoir du tailleur de S. Cyr s'il ne pouvait point aller une fois l'année à Gomerfontaine. Il est sage et bon tailleur; il habille les petites comme les grandes." cp. no. 51. 1<sup>r</sup> mai, 1707.

5) *ibid.* no. 49. 17 avril, 1707 and no. 51. 1<sup>r</sup> mai, 1707.

6) Lettres mams. II, p. 40. 30 oct., 1705. "Comment pouvez-vous faire pour les lits? Il est bien dangereux de les mettre ensemble, et je ne vous crois pas fort bien meublée."



Though there is a remarkable absence of any reference in the Gomerfontaine letters to illness or epidemics, such as those which ravaged Saint-Cyr, the yearly reports of the abbess, with which she prefaced her accounts, show that the community suffered a good deal in this way. "Gouttes, rhumatismes, fluxions de poitrine, petites véroles" are all mentioned in 1727.<sup>1)</sup> Two years before, a new infirmary had been built, for the old one consisted of only one room for the dying and the convalescents alike and was very inconvenient. "On en a fait deux", records the register, "garnies de lits tout neufs où l'on a mis toutes les commodités que l'on a pu pour votre soulagement et celui de celles qui vous suivront."<sup>2)</sup> No advice, from Madame de Maintenon or from any other, could prevent epidemics in those days, but the interest she took in the physical well-being of the girls would tend to improve the general standard of health in the school.

#### 4. Supervision.

More important even than the question of the girls' physical well-being was that of supervising them day and night. We have already seen how large a part supervision played in the educational system of Saint-Cyr, where it was the first

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<sup>1)</sup> Registres de l'abbaye de Gomerfontaine. Quoted by Briand et Maricourt. op. cit., pt. II. 1 juillet, 1907.

<sup>2)</sup> Archives de l'Oise. Registre de dépenses. 1725.

duty of the mistresses, so it is not surprising to find that Madame de Maintenon, in the Gomerfontaine letters, emphasizes its importance. There is nothing new in what she says: it had all been said already for Saint-Cyr, and it can be summed up in the words of a letter of 1708, where she says: "Je vous exhorte à la vigilance et à la patience. J'avais fait mettre autrefois ces deux mots sur toutes les portes de Saint-Cyr, car c'est véritablement ce qui est plus nécessaire aux personnes qui gouvernent."<sup>1)</sup>

a) mistresses.

The person on whom the burden of this supervision fell was the first mistress of each class, as at Saint-Cyr. It was she who was responsible for the girls: "Il est absolument nécessaire que la première maîtresse soit chargée de tout",<sup>2)</sup> wrote Madame de Maintenon in 1713. It was she who should watch the girls' progress, talk to them and apportion praise or blame. In the work of teaching she was to be helped by subordinates, who were not always attached to the same class, as at Saint-Cyr, but taught one subject through the whole school;<sup>3)</sup> but, though "specialists", they were to be defi-

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<sup>1)</sup> Divers Avis, no. 67. 20 juin, 1708.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres., sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 297-298. 9 avril 1713. "Il est absolument nécessaire que la 1<sup>re</sup> maîtresse soit chargée de tout; qu'il n'y ait qu'elle qui parle en particulier, qui fasse les grâces, qui donne les récompenses, qui ordonne les châtimens"...

<sup>3)</sup> *ibid.*, p. 352. jan. 1715. "Qu'une de vos dames aille par jour faire écrire, une autre apprendre à travailler, il n'y a rien que de bon."

nitely subordinate to the first mistress, to whom they had to report on the progress of the class. Madame de Maintenon expected the nuns to change places from time to time and the chief to become assistant to one who had lately been under her orders, and the old to be ready to obey the young. "Je ne serais pas surprise," she wrote in the same letter of 1713, "de voir votre amie sous ma soeur de Champlebon: nos classes sont pleines de ces exemples-là. Ma soeur de Radouay est au-dessous de ma soeur de Gruel, qu'elle a peut-être élevée et que bien surement elle a reçue."<sup>1)</sup>

b) monitors.

It seems probable that the work of teaching at Gomerfontaine was made easier by the instruction of what we have called the "monitorial system" of Saint-Cyr. The very fact that Madame de Maintenon mentions "la separation des bandes"<sup>2)</sup> in her first instructions assumes that the girls were divided into bands. In January, 1713, she suggests sending to Gomerfontaine Mademoiselle de Mornay, "pour modèle et pour chef de la première bande."<sup>3)</sup> The girls did not remain long enough to be given the responsibilities of the "Blacks" at Saint-Cyr, but they were divided into groups and set to

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres.. sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 298. 9 avril. 1713.

<sup>2)</sup> *ibid.*, p. 120. sep. 1705.

<sup>3)</sup> *ibid.*, p. 285-6. jan. 1713.

teach and help one another, as the following passage shows:<sup>1)</sup>

"Il est certain que, ne gardant vos pensionnaires que peu d'années, vous ne pouvez être soulagée par le secours des grandes; il faut en tirer le plus qu'on peut et y mettre de l'émulation; il y en a toujours de plus avancées les unes que les autres, et celle qui assemble les syllabes peut montrer à assembler les lettres, et ainsi du reste."

5) Treat the girls as reasonable beings.

Another aspect of the educational system of Saint-Cyr which was emphasized at Gomerfontaine was the importance of treating the girls reasonably. If they do wrong Madame de Maintenon would like to see them treated as at Saint-Cyr where "la maxime. est de commencer toujours par la douceur et la raison avant de venir à la rigueur."<sup>2)</sup> Above all, there should be some means by which the abbess or the first mistress could talk to the girls in private<sup>3)</sup> in order to get to know them and hence to be able to lead and not to drive. Madame de Maintenon expects great things from this system and she is able to point to the girls whom she has sent as helpers to Gomerfontaine as examples of the success of the method and to

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1) Lettres.. sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup>, II, p. 296. 9 avril. 1713.

2) ibid. p. 125. 5 déc. 1705.

3) ibid. p. 297. 9 avril 1713.

write in 1715: "Il faut parler à une fille de sept ans aussi raisonnablement qu'à une de vingt ans; c'est ce qui avance nos filles, comme elles le sont, quoique d'ailleurs elles n'aient aucune expérience."<sup>1)</sup>

#### Conclusion.

Such, then, were the outstanding characteristics of the education given at Gomerfontaine, which was directly derived from Madame de Maintenon and resembled Saint-Cyr as closely as circumstances would permit. Practically all our knowledge of the school comes from the Letters of Madame de Maintenon to the abbess, but other documents about Gomerfontaine exist and are too important to be passed over. These are the account books of the abbey,<sup>2)</sup> where each year's accounts are preceded by a summary, written by the abbess, of the chief events of the last twelve months. Public events - famines, Law's bankruptcy, Louis XV's marriage, deaths in the royal family - all find their place there, for Gomerfontaine, like a true child of Saint-Cyr, took an interest in what went on round about it; but the chief place is given to happenings within the abbey itself. Here is recorded the death of Madame de la Vieffville, in a passage which we shall quote in full, for she was the central figure of the school at Gomerfontaine: "Le vingt-cinq juillet, 1751, dans

Death of  
M<sup>me</sup> de la  
Vieffville.

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres.. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 354. jan. 1715.

<sup>2)</sup> Archives de l'Oise, Beauvais.

l'abbaye royale de Gomerfontaine, ordre de Citeaux, étroite observance, diocèse de Rouen, est décédée, munie des sacrements de l'Eglise, Tres Révérende Mère Marie-Anne de la Vieffville, abbesse, âgée de 74 ans. C'est au zèle, à la ferveur et à la vigilance de cette pieuse abbesse que L'Abbaye de Gomerfontaine est redevable de l'exacte régularité qui s'y observe. Elle doit encore à ses soins et à son économie, le rétablissement total des bâtiments et le bon état où elle a laissé le temporel de cette maison. Mère de ses religieuses par sa tendresse et leur soeur par son humilité, elle fut toujours moins abbesse par son titre que par la supériorité de ses lumières et sa piété profonde. C'était un fruit mûr pour le ciel. Elle est morte pleine de jours et de vertus, au milieu des pleurs et des gémissements de ses filles et des regrets de tous les pauvres, dont elle a été, dans tous les temps de sa vie, la protectrice et la consolation."

Last days of  
the abbey.

The abbey only survived for forty years after the death of Madame de la Vieffville, and nothing more is heard of the school. The next abbess, Madame de Nadaillac, held office for thirty years, and is chiefly interesting for having been a friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, when he came to live incognito

at Trie about 1767.<sup>1)</sup> Her successor, Madame de Sarcus, abandoned almost entirely the practice of writing yearly reports, so that less than ever is known of the abbey in the few years which preceded the Revolution. In 1790 Gomerfontaine, like so many other places, was attacked by the decrees of the Assemblée Nationale. An inventory was made of all its possessions where, among everything else, appear the following entries: "Dans la classe s'est trouvé quatre tables et plusieurs bancs, six chaises, deux chenets, pelle et pincette, un soufflet, trois rideaux de toile de coton avec leur tringles.... Dans le dortoir de la classe s'est trouvé dix mauvaises couchettes garnies chacune d'une mauvaise paillasse, un oreiller, une couverture de laine blanche, un couvre pieds de différentes toiles, plusieurs chaises, etc..."<sup>2)</sup> Neither class-room nor dormitory was used again, for the abbey was closed that same year, and only one wall remains standing today.

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<sup>1)</sup> Barraud. Quelques mots sur l'abbaye de Gomerfontaine. (Mémoires de la Société Académique d'Archéologie de l'Oise, t. V, p. 581. Briard et de Maricourt op. cit.)

<sup>2)</sup> Arch. de l'Oise, série, 9<sup>n</sup>.

3. Bisy - detail It is not necessary to enter into much detail about unnecessary, as it resembled Gomerfontaine closely. the Benedictine priory of Bisy, which was another community strongly marked by the influence of Saint-Cyr. In the first place, comparatively little is known about it; again, Madame de Maintenon's letters to the prioress are full of excellent advice, but a great deal of it is simply a repetition of that given to the abbess of Gomerfontaine, which we have already discussed fully. Lastly, practically all the important and interesting letters<sup>1)</sup> about Bisy have been published by Lavallée, so that there is little to be added to the impression left on reading Madame de Maintenon's correspondence with Madame de la Mairie in the second volume of the "Lettres et Entretiens sur l'Education des Filles."

Gomerfontaine earlier, but Bisy the more important. Mrs de Maintenon had

Chronologically, Bisy follows Gomerfontaine in the Saint-Cyr tradition, for Madame de la Vieville became abbess of Gomerfontaine in 1705 and Madame de la Mairie was not

1) The most important exceptions are:-

Lettres manus. no. 16 of "Lettres à M <sup>me</sup> de 29 mai 1713. (Also given in Divers								
Vol.I.				la Mairie."				Avis no.25)
" "	"	26 "	"	"	"	25 juin 1714.(	"	" " 35)
" "	"	27 "	"	"	"	7 juillet 1714	"	" " 36)
" "	"	29 "	"	"	"	8 août 1714. (	"	" " 38)
" "	"	32 "	"	"	"	6 oct. 1714. (	"	" " 41)



more hope of  
making of it  
a 2nd S. Cyr

because

1) thought more  
of M<sup>me</sup> de  
la Mairie  
than of the  
abbess.

appointed to Bisy till 1711 or 1712.<sup>1)</sup> Perhaps this is why Gomerfontaine is always mentioned first, for Bisy comes first in order of importance - at least as it appears to me.

To judge from her letters it was here that Madame de Maintenon had the most hope of establishing a second Saint-Cyr. She

had a higher<sup>2)</sup> opinion of Madame de la Mairie than of Madame de la Vieville. There is a letter<sup>3)</sup> written in 1694 which shows that Madame de Maintenon had singled her out while she was still at school, for she says to Madame de Fontaines:

"Je vous prie de penser encore à ce que nous dîmes hier sur Mesdemoiselles de la Mairie et du Courtais .... J'avoue que j'ai de la peine à voir sortir des filles à qui on trouve une bonne vocation, une vraie piété et une grande douceur dans l'humeur." This shows that Madame de Maintenon would have liked to have kept her at Saint-Cyr and there is a noticeable absence of complaints<sup>4)</sup> and reproaches in her letters to

1) Madame de Maintenon's first letter to her is dated 1712. cp. Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II p. 278. but Lettres mamus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) begin on Nov. 12th 1711.

2) Quarante Lettres Inédites de M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon. (Le Correspondant. Déc. 1859) no. 10. "M<sup>me</sup> de Bizy ... est elle-même une preuve de la bonne éducation de S.Cyr.

3) Lettres hist. I p. 336. fév. 1694.

4) But cp. Lettres mamus. I no. 26. 25 juin 1714 - where she is blamed for

a) overworking

b) expecting M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon to find a husband for a girl without a dowry

and no. 27. 7 juillet 1714 - where she is reproached for a lack of simplicity in not saying straight out if she is dissatisfied with the girls sent from S.Cyr.

Bisy, especially when contrasted with those to Gomerfontaine.

11) conditions  
more favour-  
able at Bisy  
where

Not only does Madame de la Mairie seem to have been more capable than Madame de la Vieville, but circumstances at Bisy were such as to make it an easier task for her than for the abbess to set up a school on the lines of Saint-Cyr.

Externally, there was little difference between Gomerfontaine and Bisy: both were poor<sup>1)</sup> and the buildings<sup>2)</sup> in both cases were in need of repair. But, as far as I can judge,

a) no boarders  
before

Madame de la Mairie was the first<sup>3)</sup> to admit boarders into her priory: She was therefore unhindered by "dames pensionnaires"<sup>4)</sup>

1) The finances of the priory and the gifts of M.<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon are frequently mentioned e.g.,

Lettres manus. I. no.13. 14 sep. 1713.

" 37. 12 nov. (1714)

Divers Avis. "Lettres à M.<sup>me</sup> de la

Mairie" no. 12. 26 jan. (1713?)

and "Quarante Lettres inédites de M.<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon" [Foisset. publiées dans Le Correspondant. Dec. 1859.] no. 9, 10, 13 etc.

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 341. 13 avril 1714.

Lettres manus. I "Lettres à M.<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie"

no. 7. 3 nov. 1712

no.12. août 1713

no.14.30 nov. 1713

no.26 25 juin 1714

etc.

3) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 231 9 août 1712

p.279, 1712.

4)

The discussions about the advisability of admitting them always assumes that they are not there yet, but that they wish to come. cp. Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 320, 12 déc. 1713. p. 330.1714.

b) nuns were more adaptable.

long-established there, she was able to start her school from the first on the lines of Saint-Cyr, and, above all, she had not the same difficulties with her nuns as Madame de la Viefville had at Gomerfontaine. Madame de Maintenon is full of praise for their adaptability and willingness to learn: "Ce que Mademoiselle d'Esplas<sup>1)</sup> me mande de votre communauté, Madame, me donne beaucoup d'estime pour elle. On en trouverait peu qui voulussent changer leurs anciennes méthodes ni prendre de nouvelles idées, encore moins qui déférassent aux avis d'une fille de dix-huit ans."<sup>2)</sup> This is high praise from Madame de Maintenon and, though she later finds fault with their readiness to ask advice but unwillingness to follow it<sup>3)</sup> and with their tendency<sup>4)</sup> to take too much interest in

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1) One of the girls sent from S.Cyr to help to introduce its educational system into Bisy.

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 281. 9 août 1712. cp.p. 349. 12 nov. 1714.

3) Quarante Lettres Inédites (cp.supra p.27 note 3) . no. 43. 2 nov. 1715.

4) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 280. 10 juillet 1712. "les autres religieuses ne voudront point changer leur manière, et ne se résoudront jamais à ne se point mêler de leurs parentes ou autres pensionnaires." cp. Divers Avis. no. 38.

their sisters or other relations in the school, she never writes of them as incapable of improvement.

Bisy letters  
are full of  
confidence  
that -

The outstanding note in Madame de Maintenon's letters about Bisy is one of hope and confidence; hope<sup>1)</sup> that there at least she will be able to extend the work begun at Saint-Cyr, and confidence in the methods to which she attributes her success. In extending the work of Saint-Cyr she did not

in spite of  
the advantages  
of S. Cyr -

expect to make Bisy a mere copy of it: the differences between them were too great. After enumerating the advantages that Saint-Cyr enjoyed, by virtue of its foundation, over any other community, she goes on to say "Vous ne pouvez, Madame, imiter entièrement ce qui se fait à Saint-Cyr, mais vous devez tâcher de la faire en tout ce qui vous sera possible: vos pensionnaires en seront bien mieux élevées, et vos religieuses en seront soulagées."<sup>2)</sup> The confidence with which she speaks here is remarkable: it is as though, by the end of her life, she began to be content with the results of her work at Saint-Cyr, where, in spite of the failures

its system  
of education

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 283. 24 déc. 1712. "Vous m'avez paru avoir tant de dispositions à profiter de ce qui s'est établi à S. Cyr, que je me sens un grand zèle pour vous communiquer tout ce que nous savons, et qui, grâce à Dieu, réussit bien."

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 317 12 déc. 1713. cp. p. 306 mai, 1713, and Lettres mams I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 28. 24 juillet 1714.

could be  
adopted at  
Bisy with  
advantage.

of the past, the system of education she had laboured to introduce was at last firmly established<sup>1)</sup> - so firmly, unhappily, as to be incapable of change. Her chief desire now is to let other people benefit by her experience and no other community seems better suited to be a seed plot of her ideas than Bisy. Her letter of 1713 will make this abundantly clear: "Je ne sais si je me flatte sur l'éducation de Saint-Cyr, mais je vous avoue que je la crois très bonne; je voudrais de tout mon coeur la communiquer et l'établir dans les autres maisons où il y a des pensionnaires; la vôtre me semble plus propre qu'aucune autre à ce dessein. Vous avez bon esprit, votre communauté est petite et j'ai lieu de croire qu'elle est raisonnable ..... Il n'en est pas de même des autres couvents."<sup>2)</sup> If such were her hopes for Bisy, it is no wonder that she wrote so assiduously to Madame de la Mairie from the time she was made prioress and sent her all manner of help from Saint-Cyr.

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettres manus. I. (a M.<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 37. 12 nov. (1711?) - a M. l'évêque d'Evreux - "Si elle (M.<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) pouvait avoir des pensionnaires je pourrais lui prêter pour quelques mois une de nos demoiselles qui lui donnerait de bons avis là-dessus, car l'éducation de St. Cyr va beaucoup mieux depuis dix ans qu'elle n'allait du temps de M.<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie."

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II p. 287. 9 fév. 1713.  
cp.p. 233 5 déc. 1712.

Characteristics  
of this sys-  
tem of  
education.

When we go on to consider what were the outstanding points in the pedagogical system of whose success Madame de Maintenon felt so confident, we find that they are just those which she had already emphasized in the Gomerfontaine letters. Religious training<sup>1)</sup> as the basis of all education: the importance, for this, of having good confessors:<sup>2)</sup> training of the reason:<sup>3)</sup> patience:<sup>4)</sup> individual attention:<sup>5)</sup> vigilance,<sup>6)</sup> to which the nuns should be able to give their whole attention, by having helpers,<sup>7)</sup> chosen from among the

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II p. 305. mai 1713.

2) Ibid. p. 295, 9 avril 1713. and Lettres manus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no 26. 25 juin 1714. "Je ne vois rien de plus pressé chez vous que d'y loger votre confesseur: c'est le moyen qui vous fera plus de bien," and no. 38.

3) Lettres manus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 16. "Voyez dans toute la conduite des demoiselles de St Cyr combien leur raison est avancée." cp. Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 336, 7 fév. 1714. p. 329. 1714. p. 3. mai 1713. etc.

4) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II. p. 333. 7 fév. 1714. Lettres manus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie)  
no. 25. 7 juin 1714.  
no. 29. 8 août 1714.  
no. 32. 6 oct. 1714. - "Quand je vous prêche la patience, ce n'est pas pour blâmer que vous ayez fait châtier des enfants: c'est seulement pour vous exhorter à ne jamais vous rebuter."

5) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 332, 1714.  
p. 335, 7 fév. 1714.

6) Ibid. II, p. 279, 1712.  
p. 305, mai 1713.

7) Ibid. p. 318. 12 dec. 1713. cp. Lettres manus. I no. 17. 12 jan. 1714. (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) "Vous avez très bien fait de conseiller à votre première maîtresse de ne pas changer de chef puisque vous n'êtes pas, comme nous, dans l'abondance." And no. 38.

girls, for the work of teaching - these are the recommendations to which she comes back over and over again. The warning that education is a work of patience seems to have been particularly necessary there, where the nuns were too apt to look for quick results: "Ce que je trouve à redire à elle et à vous aussi, madame," wrote Madame de Maintenon about a nun<sup>1)</sup> from Biszy who was spending some time at Saint-Cyr, "c'est que vous êtes trop étonnées du peu d'avancement de vos enfants. Madame de Bertout est desolée de ce que Mademoiselle Serasin a de la peine à apprendre à lire" - and "Mademoiselle Serasin"<sup>2)</sup> was only five or six years old! It would be easy to illustrate the other points in Madame de Maintenon's instructions to Biszy, but it would be scarcely profitable, as they so closely resemble those given to Gomerfontaine.

Biszy - the school.

There are not sufficient references to the life of the school at Biszy to allow of any reconstruction of it being made here. The priory had been founded in the early part of the seventeenth century and had received its letters patent of foundation from Louis XIV in 1677, but the first

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1) <sup>M</sup>me de Bertout. vide infra.

2) Lettres manusc. I (a <sup>M</sup>me de la Mairie) no. 29. 8 août 1714. cp. Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 343. 6 mai. 1714.

a) nuns.

prioress of importance was Madame de la Mairie. It was not a large community: in 1723 it consisted of sixteen nuns and five lay sisters.<sup>1)</sup> Some of the nuns are spoken of by name: one of these was the Madame Bertout mentioned above. She was liked at Saint-Cyr during her visit but she was not very good as a teacher, for the girls could not hear what she said. There was also a Madame Sougé of whom one of the Saint-Cyr helpers had a great opinion "pour sa capacité dans les classes."<sup>2)</sup> She too spent some time at Saint-Cyr to learn how the school was organized. We know practically nothing about the others.

Madame de Maintenon advises the prioress to assign four nuns to the duty of teaching and to let each pair spend one day teaching, and one day at the community, in turn. She also insists on the importance of having one in command and the other three under her and recommends that they should take turns in filling the principal post.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) Ed. Meyer. Histoire de la Ville de Vernon. 1876. II, p. 378.

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 342. 18 avril 1714.

3) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 334, 7 fev. 1714. 4 are mentioned also, p. 342. 18 avril 1714.



b) S. Cyriennes. Besides the regular nuns there were various helpers from Saint Cyr, some of whom took vows later at Bisy, when its financial position<sup>1)</sup> became safer. Among these helpers should be mentioned Mademoiselle d'Esplas - "sage, douce et si habile qu'on l'a déjà mise (i.e. à Saint-Cyr) maîtresse dans deux classes"<sup>2)</sup> - Mademoiselle de Saint-Messant who was delicate<sup>3)</sup> but to whom Madame de Maintenon wrote:- "Je suis si contente de vos lettres et de toute votre conduite, ma chère enfant, que je veux vous le dire moi-même."<sup>4)</sup> Mademoiselle de Lasmastres and Mademoiselle de Glapion, the niece of the superior of Saint-Cyr,<sup>5)</sup> Madame de Maintenon's great friend. These helpers generally spent three months<sup>6)</sup> at Bisy at a time, though they might be sent back again for another three months.

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 289. 9 fév. 1713. cp. Quarante Lettres Inédites, no. 13. Lettres manus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 32. 6 oct. 1714. Lettres et Avis (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 10. 4 jan. 1713.

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 280. 10 juillet 1712.

3) Lettres manus. I. (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 18. 21 jan. 1714.

4) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 338. 15 mars 1714.

5) Note to "Divers Avis" (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 20 and cp. Lettres manus. I. pt. 1. no. 41.

6) Lettres manus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) no. 17. 12 jan. 1714. "Vous aurez en même temps M<sup>lle</sup> de Saint-Messant pour modèle, et au bout de ses trois mois je renverrai M<sup>lle</sup> de Glapion. Il ne faut pas demander de leur âge une plus longue persévérance, et il ne faut pas aussi les priver plus longtemps de Saint Cyr. cp. Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 283. 5 déc. 1712.

On the whole, they seem to have been exceptionally successful<sup>1)</sup> and to have carried out, to the best of their abilities, Madame de Maintenon's instructions<sup>2)</sup> on sending them.

c) pupils.

The pupils came from as different social classes as at Gomerfontaine. Some were qualified by birth for admission into Saint-Cyr<sup>3)</sup> others were of the ordinary middle classes. It would seem that they did not stay at school very long,<sup>4)</sup> for Madame de Maintenon is anxious to get them younger,<sup>5)</sup> and mentions the shortness of their school life as one of the differences<sup>6)</sup> between Biszy and Saint-Cyr. We do not know how many pupils there were, but there seem to have been

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1) cp. Lettres hist. II, p. 421. 14 sep. 1714 but cf. Lettres manus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) 7 juillet 1714.

2) Given most fully in Lettres manus. I, no. 38.

3) e.g. M<sup>lle</sup> de Martinvast. Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 278, 1712.  
M<sup>lle</sup> de Civiecourt. Lettres manus. I, no. 17.  
M<sup>lle</sup> d'Hapancourt, niece of M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie, was also there. Lettres manus, p. 334, 339.

4) Lettres manus. p. 296, 291.

5) Ibid. p. 312.

6) Ibid. no. 28. 24 juillet 1714. "Les autres talents qu'on leur donne ici ne sont pas essentiels, et on a du temps pour tout. Vous n'êtes pas de même car on vous les laisse peu."

comparatively few.<sup>1)</sup> The instructions for their education closely resemble those given to Gomerfontaine; as the following quotations will show. They were to be prepared for their sphere in life:- "Instruisez vos bourgeoises en bourgeoises";<sup>2)</sup> they were to be taught the rudiments and the catechism - "Vous devez vous borner au catéchisme, lire et écrire";<sup>3)</sup> and sewing was to be made a pleasure - "leur donner le goût de l'ouvrage en le diversifiant le plus qu'on peut."<sup>4)</sup> On the whole Madame de Maintenon discourages acting<sup>5)</sup> at Biszy, whether of "Esther" or of the "Conversations", but on the other hand she wants the girls to have plenty of games<sup>6)</sup> to occupy them during their recreations and pays for them herself.

The similarity between these instructions and those given to Madame de la Vieffville shows that Madame de Maintenon

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1) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 290-1. 9 mars, 1713.  
cp. Lettres manus. I (à M<sup>me</sup> de la Mairie) 8 avril 1714;  
"Comment feriez-vous pour prendre beaucoup de pensionnaires n'ayant pas de logement?"

2) Lettres .. sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II. p. 307. mai 1713.

3) Ibid. p. 308. mai. 1713.  
cp. Lettres manus. I. no. 29. 8 août 1714.

4) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II, p. 328. 1714.

5) Ibid. p. 308, mai. 1713., p. 330. 1714. But cf. p. 292. 9 mars. 1713. "C'est bien fait dans les récréations d'apprendre Esther."

6) Ibid. p. 284, 24 déc. 1712.  
332. 1714.

considered that she had summed up in them the most important elements in her system of education. Her great desire now was to pass on this system to other schools. Bisy, however, was not destined to be a lasting foundation. It was always poor and had a hard struggle to maintain itself and it suffered as well from its neighbours, the maréchal de Belle-Isle,<sup>1)</sup> for example, who appropriated some of the priory grounds, promising the nuns in exchange money which he never paid. In 1773, on account of its poverty, the priory ceased to have an independent existence but was united to the Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Trouville-les-Vernon, and three years later its property was sold to the duc de Penthièvre, from whose family it passed to the present possessor, the Marquis d'Albufera.

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4. "L'Institut de l'Enfant Jésus" founded by Languet de Gergy.

Gomerfontaine and Bisy must always come first among the schools which were influenced by Saint-Cyr, for they were founded by "Saint Cyriennes" and supported by Madame de Maintenon herself. The "Institut de l'Enfant-Jésus", to which we must now turn our attention, cannot, perhaps, claim

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<sup>1)</sup>Ed. Meyer. op. cit.

an equally close connection, but it does not come far behind. For it was founded by one who knew Madame de Maintenon intimately (he was her confessor during the last years of her life) and who also knew Saint-Cyr. He introduced his pupils to it, too, and a book of "Mémoires des Dames de Saint-Louis"<sup>1)</sup> ends with a description of how he brought them out to visit the school which had been the model for their own.

The founder.

The founder of the Institut de l'Enfant-Jésus was Jean-Baptiste Languet de Gergy,<sup>2)</sup> curé of Saint-Sulpice and brother of the archbishop of Sens, who was also the author of the Memoirs about Madame de Maintenon. Jean-Baptiste was born in 1675 at Dijon, and educated by the Jesuits and then at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where he took orders. He was then sent to Vienne for a short time, but returned in 1704 as "vicaire" to Monsieur de la Chetardie, whom he succeeded in 1714. It was at this time that he came into contact with Madame de Maintenon, whose confessor he was for some years. Part of her correspondence with him has been preserved and it alone would be sufficient proof of his wide interests and unsparing charities.<sup>3)</sup> But it is chiefly as the builder of

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<sup>1)</sup> Quoted by Lavallée: ch. 15. p. 320.

<sup>2)</sup> Ch. Hamel. Histoire de l'Eglise Saint-Sulpice. ch. 9.. Paris. 1900.

<sup>3)</sup> Le Correspondant. Décembre 1859. Quarante Lettres Inédites de Madame de Maintenon. Foisset.

Saint-Sulpice, as it now stands, that he is remembered. The church was completed and dedicated in 1745. Three years later he resigned his cure, but he continued to take an interest in his various works until his death which came in 1750.

His charities. It must not be thought that, because no mention is made of his other works here, the Institut de l'Enfant-Jésus was the only one to which Languet de Gergy devoted himself. Historians of Saint-Sulpice<sup>1)</sup> are full of praise for his work among the soldiers and among prisoners and in its origin the Institut de l'Enfant-Jésus was a charity like the rest. The principle upon which it was founded was the eminently sound one that it is better to provide people with work than to give them money, so, instead of distributing alms among the women and girls of the parish, he opened a work-room or factory<sup>1)</sup> for them. A large number were employed there: the figures quoted vary from two hundred to fourteen thousand who received help from it at any one time during its existence.<sup>2)</sup>

The Institut  
had two  
parts:-

<sup>1)</sup>a factory.

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<sup>1)</sup> op. Hamel. op. cit. Simon de Doncourt. Remarques Historiques sur l'Eglise et la Paroisse de St. Sulpice. L.S. Mercier. Tableau de Paris. Partie IV. ch. 327.

<sup>2)</sup> Arch. Nat. S. 7051-7052. Tableau des Maisons et Revenus Fondés en faveur des Pauvres. No. 1349. Maison Royale de l'Enfant-Jésus, rue de Sève. "Lettres Patentes portant confirmation de l'établissement de la maison de l'Enfant Jésus à Paris" speak of "200 femmes et filles". Ch. Hamel op. cit. and Réaulx "Le Roi Stanislas et Marie Leczinska" p. 347 say 14,000.

Three categories of beneficiaries are mentioned in a Mémoire drawn up by Languet de Gergy in 1747:<sup>1)</sup> the old and infirm were looked after and given very light work to do and there were readings and prayers for them at various times during the day. The strong young women and the girls all found employment in a muslin factory which had been opened for them. The heavy work was left to the women, and the girls were occupied "spinning cotton for muslin and other cotton materials and spinning fine thread."<sup>2)</sup> They were also given "the necessary instruction on Religion and their duty,"<sup>3)</sup> by the nuns who were in charge of the establishment, the Filles de Saint-Thomas de Villeneuve. Finally, besides work and instruction, each received a bowl of soup, a pound and a half of bread and a small sum of money every day.<sup>4)</sup>

Its success.

The foundation was a success from every point of view. Not only were hundreds of women saved from the misery of the streets,<sup>5)</sup> but the factory became a paying business concern,

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1) Arch. Nat. G<sup>5</sup> 151. Mémoire de Languet de Gergy en 1747.

2) Idem.

3) Lettres patentes. art. 3.

4) Arch. Nat. F<sup>15</sup> 269. Rapport du 6 brumaire de l'an III.

5) Simon de Doncourt. op. cit. p. 79. "Les jeunes gens en étaient furieux, et Languet de Gergy dut obtenir une ordonnance pour les empêcher de venir dans les salles de travail et de les attendre à la sortie."

and was given the monopoly of the fabrication of muslin in Paris.<sup>1)</sup> In addition to the work-room we hear of a dairy farm, a bake-house and a dispensary, where work must have been available for many people and which at the same time furnished the poor of the parish with bread and the children with milk.<sup>2)</sup>

2) a school.

Founded for  
"Demoiselles  
d'extraction  
noble".

Useful and interesting as this side of the Institut is, it is not there that we must look for any traces of the influence of Saint-Cyr. But the factory was only half the Institut. The preamble to the Letters Patent of Foundation, granted in 1752, explains what considerations had led to the foundation of this side of the work: the document then goes on to tell how, after that, Languet de Gergy "porta ses vues plus loin, et..., touché de l'état où la pauvreté réduit également des Demoiselles d'extraction noble, il résolut d'en admettre un certain nombre dans cet Etablissement, afin qu'elles y reçussent, non seulement une éducation convenable à leur naissance comme à la médiocrité de leur fortune, mais même, qu'étant employées, selon leur âge et leurs talents aux diverses parties d'administration intérieure, elles apprissent et l'art de suppléer par leur bonne conduite à ce qui leur manquait du côté des biens, et celui de secourir les Pauvres en les occupant." Thus, alongside of the factory, there

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1) Hamel. op. cit. ch. 9.

2) Mercier. op. cit.



was established a school and it is this school which really concerns us here.

Aim.

The aim of the school, as stated above, was to help girls of noble birth but no fortune by educating them free of charge, and giving them, in addition to some religious instruction and a bare minimum of secular learning, a thorough training in those arts which would be useful in the home. The foundation provided for about twenty-eight girls between the ages of seven and nineteen.<sup>1)</sup>

Conditions  
of admission

The following quotation from the Letters Patent shows on what conditions pupils were admitted into the school: "Elles ne seront point admises à moins qu'elles ne soient saines d'esprit et de corps, et qu'elles ne justifient, ainsi que cela s'est ci-devant observé, qu'elles sont nées en légitime mariage, de parents pauvres et hors d'état de leur procurer une éducation convenable, et qu'elles sont d'une ancienne noblesse, constatée par des titres originaux qui prouvent que leurs ancêtres en ligne directe jouissaient en mil cinq cent cinquante du titre de Chevalier ou d'Ecuyer,<sup>2)</sup> et qu'ils n'ont point dérogé depuis cette époque".

nominations.

As the number of applicants who satisfied these conditions exceeded the number of places vacant, the system of nomination was carefully marked out too. Two places were at the disposal

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<sup>1)</sup> The "Lettres Patentes" fix the number at 16, though the preamble speaks of 30, and 28 are mentioned when the inventory was taken in February 1790: this is also the number given in an appeal addressed to the queen in 1785. Arch. Nat.Gg 151.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres Patentes. art. 5.

of a benefactress, the Marquise de Lassay and one at that of Languet de Gergy and of his successors. When any other place fell vacant the "Bureau d'Administration" (to which we shall return later) weighed the rival claims of the candidates and made their recommendation to the Archbishop of Sens, Jean-Joseph Languet de Gergy, or, after his death, to the Archbishop of Paris. The Archbishop then reported to the king who made the formal nomination.<sup>1)</sup> Thus both the conditions of admission and the system of nominations to the Institut resemble very closely those in force at Saint-Cyr.

Life at the  
Institut.

Clothes.

Once admitted to the Institut, the girls were no longer any burden to their families, for everything was provided for them. They wore a fashionable uniform, black for ordinary days but white when they went out with their parents.<sup>2)</sup> All their underlinen was provided too and each girl's weekly allowance - "deux chemises, une paire de bas, et des bonnets de linon qu'elles se montent elles-mêmes" - is solemnly set down in the minutes of the answers given by the superior to the Conseil Civil in 1793.<sup>3)</sup> The same document tells what

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1) Lettres Patentes. art. 15.

2) Guide des Amateurs et des Etrangers voyageant à Paris. 1787. Thiery. t. II. p. 450. (quoted L. Lambeau. op. cit.)

3) Archives de l'Assistance Publique. Recueil de l'hôpital des Enfants Malades. no. 11. Quoted L. Lambeau. op. cit. "Procès Verbal dressé le 9 juin 1793 ... à la suite de l'interrogatoire de la supérieure de l'Enfant Jésus."

food, etc.

care the girls received in other respects: they were, of course, boarded, lodged and looked after for nothing, and we are told "qu'elles couchaient dans deux dortoirs de plain-pied, chacune dans un lit, seules; que leur nourriture consistait, le matin, du pain; à dîner, soupe, bouilli et une entrée, fort peu de vin; à goûter, du pain; et pour leur souper, un rôti et de la salade en été deux fois par semaine et qu'attendu la cherté de la viande, elle (i.e. la supérieure) supplée quelquefois des légumes au rôti." Nothing is said about the health of the girls, so it looks as though they flourished upon this régime.

education.

a) lessons.

The side of their education upon which most stress was laid was domestic work as preparation for the home. The girls certainly learnt "their religious duties, reading, reckoning, history and a little drawing"<sup>1)</sup> and we can be sure that their religious instruction was not neglected.<sup>2)</sup> One entry in the inventory of 1790 also suggests that their education was more liberal than appears from the scanty references to it which have survived: for among the furniture of the house is mentioned "...un forte piano, une basse, un violon, un clavecin en vente depuis longtemps. Une bibliothèque domestique,

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1) Idem.

2) Lettres Patentes. art 4. "Elles seront élevées dans les exercices de piété."

b) practical  
work

environ 2,000 volumes de piété, d'histoire et autres propres à l'éducation.<sup>1)</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of references to books and music, there is no doubt that domestic education took the first place at the Institut de l'Enfant-Jésus. The girls learnt sewing, knitting, embroidery, lace-making and mending, laundry-work and dress-making.<sup>2)</sup> They helped to run the house and they were sometimes "apprenticed" (as the Blacks were at Saint-Cyr) to one of the nuns who was in charge of some special department such as the muslin factory, the bakery, the garden, the farm or the dispensary; and thus they acquired a thorough knowledge of all sorts of practical work.<sup>3)</sup> Special care was taken in seeing that all of them learnt something about simple remedies and nursing, for such knowledge would always be useful to them and utility was the outstanding characteristic of the education given at the Institut.

Girls, on  
leaving school,  
received a  
dowry. Some  
became nuns.

On leaving, each girl received a dowry of five hundred francs in clothes and linen.<sup>4)</sup> The greater number of them

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<sup>1)</sup> Arch. Nat. S. 7051-7052. Inventaire de la Maison de l'Enfant Jésus. 27 février 1790.

<sup>2)</sup> Procès Verbal. 9 juin 1793. And Mémoire de Languet de Gergy 1747. Lettres Patentes, art. 8.

<sup>3)</sup> Guide des Amateurs et des Etrangers voyageant à Paris 1787. Thiéry II, p. 450.

<sup>4)</sup> Arch. Nat. G8 151. "La Maison donne à chacune un trousseau de 500<sup>fr</sup> en habits et linge."

became nuns and they seem to have been as greatly in demand as girls from the Royal House of Saint-Cyr. "Elles sont tellement estimées," wrote Languet de Gergy in 1747, "qu'une infinité d'autres Monastères désirent et demandent continuellement au Suppléant de tels sujets, se relâchant même sur le prix de la dot et des accommodements en faveur de la piété, bonne éducation, et talents de ces Demoiselles." Others went back to their fathers' homes and either there or later, in homes of their own, found opportunities to use the knowledge and talents which they had acquired at school.<sup>1)</sup>

others  
returned  
home.

#### Criticism.

1) praise for  
its order.

2) resemblance  
to St Cyr.

The feature which most impressed contemporary writers about the Institut was the order which reigned there, both in the school and in the factory.<sup>2)</sup> It was held up as an example to other religious communities and it was not accidental, for the preface to the Letters Patent tells how the aim of the founder was, among other things, to bring back women and girls "to the love of order and of work". What strikes us most, however, is its likeness to Saint-Cyr. Several points of resemblance - conditions of admission, system of nomination, uniform, "apprenticing" girls to nuns, dowries - have already been mentioned and there were others besides. This is not

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1) Mémoire de Languet de Gergy, 1747, and preface to the Lettres Patentes.

2) Simon de Doncourt. Remarques sur.... St Sulpice, p.195. L.S. Mercier. Tableau de Paris, pt. IV. ch. 327 & 328.

connection  
with St. Cyr.

surprising, for the school was definitely modelled upon Saint-Cyr: "On avait pris pour base les règlements de la cy-devant maison de Saint-Cyr. Les titres nécessaires pour l'admission, les preuves de noblesse étaient les mêmes," says a Report of the committee of Public Assistance at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>1)</sup> This statement finds support in others,<sup>2)</sup> and surely no further justification is required for the inclusion of the Institut de l'Enfant Jésus in the educational tradition inherited from Madame de Maintenon.

External  
provision  
for the  
Institut:-

a) house

The questions of the material side of the school - its buildings, finances and government - and of its history, are of less interest to us here, but they cannot be passed over altogether. The house<sup>3)</sup> was situated between the rue de Sévre and the rue de Vaugirard and consisted of two large buildings and two smaller ones. The girls' classrooms, dormitories and refectory were all together in one block: the nuns and the servants were scattered, some in the one building and some in the other. The furniture was of the simplest, but outside there was a field and two large gardens, and Languet de Gergy possessed two other houses as well, one at Issy and one at

1) Arch. Nat. Fl5 269.

2) Mémoires du duc de Luynes. IX p. 127.

3) Arch. Nat. S. 7051-2. Inventaire. cp. L. Lambeau. La Maison Royale de l'Enfant Jésus.

b) money

Vaugirard, but they were too far off to be of any practical use except as a source of income.<sup>1)</sup> They formed part of the endowment given to the Institut by Languet de Gergy, which included also certain buildings and grounds and shares in the India Company.<sup>2)</sup> to this was added 6,000 livres a year given by the Marquise de Lassay.<sup>3)</sup> The sale of butter in Paris brought in a little more, and in 1790, the total income of the house is reckoned at 24,130 livres and the expenditure at 8,758,<sup>4)</sup> but very different figures were given a few years previously,<sup>5)</sup> and there is no doubt that the Institut sometimes found itself in debt and difficulties.<sup>6)</sup>

c) governing body.

The finances of the house were controlled by a "bureau d'administration", which looked after certain other business as well.<sup>7)</sup> At the head of the bureau was the Archbishop of Paris and the curé of Saint-Sulpice had always to be represented while Jean-Joseph Languet de Gergy, Archbishop of Sens, was

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1) Lettres Patentes. Préface.

2) Arch. Nat. G8 151. A la Reine.

3) Lettres Patentes. art. 14.

4) Arch. Nat. S. 7051-2.

5) Arch. Nat. S. G8 151.

6) Ibid. "Les dettes se montent à 84, 527<sup>ff</sup> 18<sup>s</sup>: elles sont dues à 50 personnes, qui sont fournisseurs, ouvriers, domestiques, etc., etc."

7) Lettres Patentes. art. 9, 10, 11, 12.

appointed a life-member too. There were ten other members who had to be elected, and their duties were to meet fortnightly or monthly (three constituted a quorum) and deal with any financial or external business.

d) mistresses.  
Filles de la  
Congrégation  
de St Thomas  
de Villeneuve.

All the internal affairs of the house were managed by the nuns of the Congregation of Saint-Thomas-de-Villeneuve who looked after the school and the factory and all the dependancies.

This Congregation had been started in Brittany in 1660 and had come to Paris about 1700, where Languet de Gergy had succeeded Monsieur de la Chétardie as their ecclesiastical superior.<sup>1)</sup> When he founded the Institut he called them in "pour vacquer d'une part à l'instruction et éducation des Demoiselles, et de l'autre à l'instruction et conduite pour le travail des pauvres Filles du Peuple."<sup>2)</sup> Their numbers were never large: in 1790 there were seven nuns, two novices and eight lay sisters.<sup>3)</sup> The nuns divided the duties of the establishment between them and among the various positions are mentioned those of superior, mistress of the workroom, mistress of the school, mistress of the pharmacy, house-keeper and nurse.<sup>4)</sup> There were also servants, both men and women, to help in the

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1) de Doncourt. op. cit. p. 78-9.

2) Mémoire de Languet de Gergy. 1747.

3) Inventaire. 1790.

4) Arch. Nat. Fl5 269. Secours Publics. Rapport.



house;<sup>1)</sup> but nevertheless the numbers seem very small for all that would have to be done in the establishment and we can understand why the Letters Patent said that the nuns "pourront se faire aider par elles (i.e. les Demoiselles nobles) dans quelques uns des soins qui regardent la direction intérieure de la Maison."<sup>2)</sup>

History of  
the Institut.

foundation

Lettres  
Patent.

Patronage of  
Marie  
Leczinska.

Little is known of the history of the Institut de l'Enfant Jésus. The date of its foundation is given sometimes as 1718,<sup>3)</sup> sometimes as 1722-24.<sup>4)</sup> Before his death, the founder was anxious to establish it upon a permanent basis and with this object he addressed a "Mémoire" or appeal for Letters Patent of Foundation to the king in 1747.<sup>5)</sup> These were finally granted in 1751. The preface to them shows what share Marie Leczinska had in the creation of the school: she is sometimes spoken of as the "foundress",<sup>6)</sup> but "patroness" would be a more correct description. She was no Madame de Maintenon, but she showed an interest in the work and used her influence

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1) Inventaire.

2) Art. 8.

3) Lebeuf ed. Cocheris. Histoire de Paris. 1863. Vol. III. 2<sup>e</sup> partie. p. 270.

4) Lambeau. op. cit.

5) Arch. Nat., G8 151 2.

6) Fleury Vindry. St Cyr au temps de Louis XV.

to obtain the letters of foundation, the preamble to which states that they were granted because "la Reine, notre très-chère Epouse et compagne, ayant bien voulu s'assurer par elle-même de l'esprit d'ordre qui préside à cet Etablissement, a cru qu'il était digne de sa piété de le soutenir par sa protection."

The Revolution

After the formal foundation, practically nothing is heard of the Institut until its destruction in the Revolution, though it appears that it was fashionable, for it was visited by the royal family, and that it was talked about, and that it suffered the usual ups and downs.<sup>1)</sup> In 1790 the nuns made an unsuccessful protest against the sale of their possessions, pleading that they belonged neither to the clergy nor to the king nor to the estate, but had been bequeathed to them by Languet de Gergy and were therefore private property.<sup>2)</sup> They lost their case, but they were allowed to go on living in the house and to look after the sick and the poor for some years longer. Finally, all the nuns were put under arrest, except one who was very old and quite blind, and the house was closed down. From 1795 till 1802 it was turned into the

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1) For all the history cp. L. Lambeau. op. cit.

2) Arch. Nat. S. 7051-2. "Opposition de la Supérieure de ladite maison à la vente des biens."

"Hôpital des Orphelins de Paris", and then it became a sick children's hospital, as it is to-day. The Filles de St Thomas de Villeneuve were put in charge of it again in 1814, but when, in 1836, their places were taken by nurses who were not nuns, the last link with the past was broken. It is hard to find in the democratic Hôpital Laennec any trace of the Institut that Languet de Gergy founded because "rien n'a paru plus utile dans toutes les Nations chrétienne et bien policées, que de contribuer à l'éducation des Filles, spécialement des Nobles".<sup>1)</sup>

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#### 5. Convents.

Was the influence of S. Cyr felt in them? Contradictory answers.

There is no doubt at all about the influence of Saint-Cyr on Gomerfontaine and Biszy, and, though less is known about the Institut de l'Enfant-Jésus, it is quite clearly in the Saint-Cyr tradition too. When we turn, however, to what, after all, were at the time the most important centres for the education of girls, namely the convents, the traces of this influence become much fainter. At first this seems surprising: we remember the words of Héber: "Tous les couvents ont les yeux sur Saint-Cyr",<sup>2)</sup> and how Madame de Maintenon wrote: "On

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<sup>1)</sup>Mémoire, 1747.

<sup>2)</sup>Héber. Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV. (e)  
(Revue de France, 1<sup>er</sup> août, 1924).

me demande partout des demoiselles de Saint-Cyr,"<sup>1)</sup> and we are ready to believe that all the teaching orders were only too anxious to copy Saint-Cyr methods in their schools. But it should not be forgotten that, towards the end of her life at least, Madame de Maintenon did not expect to be able to exercise much influence on the convent schools: "Ils ont leur esprit, leurs coutumes", she wrote to Madame de la Mairie in 1713,<sup>2)</sup> "et nos demoiselles qui s'y feront religieuses auront à les prendre, à s'y conformer, et à tâcher d'oublier ce qui se fait à Saint-Cyr." Which impression is right? Did Saint-Cyr leave its mark on the convent schools, or were the convents unaffected, from the point of view of education, by the Saint-Cyriennes who entered them?

This answer does not claim to be exhaustive.

It would be necessary, in order to give a conclusive answer to this question, to investigate the history of all the convents, abbays and priories where there were schools attached and into which girls from Saint-Cyr are known to have entered. Now, Fleury Vindry gives a list of about

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1) Quoted by Lavallée. Ch. 11, p. 234.

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> II, p. 287.

three hundred "Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr"<sup>1)</sup> whose order and convent is known, so that such an investigation would be obviously beyond the scope of the present work. Two orders only have been examined, the two most closely connected with Saint-Cyr - the Ursulines and the Visitandines.

\* \* \*

A.  
The Ursulines  
must be con-  
sidered.

- i) importance  
as a teach-  
ing order
- ii) many  
S. Cyriennes  
entered it.

but they were  
little affected  
by S. Cyr.

No discussion of the education of girls in the seven-teenth and eighteenth centuries in France can pass over the Ursuline schools in silence. For the Ursulines were the great teaching order, and hence their schools play a most important part in the history of women's education. This is one reason why they are chosen for special investigation here: the other is, that many girls educated at Saint-Cyr became Ursulines on leaving school. It would therefore be reasonable to expect that some Saint-Cyr principles of education would be carried by them into their new surroundings. But I can find no trace of this having happened. The facts point to Saint-Cyr being the debtor of the Ursuline schools rather than their creditor, with one important exception.

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<sup>1)</sup> Fleury Vindry. Les Demoiselles de S. Cyr.

The Ursulines owe to Saint-Cyr certain documents which, as they themselves admit, have been of the greatest value to them - the educational writings of Madame de Maintenon.

Sketch of  
history of  
the Order.

It is not necessary to enter here into the history of the order. The barest outline will suffice to remind the reader of their priority to Saint-Cyr and to serve as a framework for a description of their schools.<sup>1)</sup> The Order was founded in Italy by Sainte Angèle Merici in 1537, and was greatly extended by Saint Charles Borromeo at Milan. It was introduced into France at the end of the sixteenth century by César de Bus, who adopted the Constitutions of the Ursulines of Italy, for a community which he wished to found in France. One of the members of this community was Madame Bermond, who was the pioneer of the new order in Provence. From Provence it was brought to Paris where was established the congregation of the "Grandes Ursulines" - so called because they took a fourth vow, to devote themselves to education, in addition to the three of poverty, chastity and obedience.

The name of Madame de Sainte-Beuve will always be associated

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<sup>1)</sup>For the history of the order cp. Annales de l'Ordre de S<sup>te</sup> Ursule. 1857.

with the convent of the rue Saint-Jacques at Paris.<sup>1)</sup> She was its foundress and she is to be remembered not only for the financial help she gave the Ursulines but for the interest she took in them and the counsel she offered them. She might almost be called their Madame de Maintenon. It was thanks to her that the Congregation of Paris was established and soon came to the forefront of the Order. The other congregations, however, must not be forgotten. There were nine of these altogether by the time of the Revolution, each composed of a group of convents. These were all swept away in 1792 and many of the nuns put to death. In 1806 the ban was removed and the Ursulines carried on their work of education for about a hundred years, when the laws against teaching Orders drove the most of them to seek a refuge out of France. Recent statistics give the number of their pupils as about a hundred thousand,<sup>2)</sup> so that if it could be shown that Saint-Cyr had modified their educational system in any way, it would follow from that alone that it had exercised an appreciable influence on the education of girls.

The Ursulines, therefore, were definitely a teaching

Educational  
system of the  
Ursulines.

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1) H. de Leymont. "Madame de Sainte-Beuve et les Ursulines de Paris." 1890.

2) The Ursulines. Catholic Truth Society. 1917.

order whose "end and excellence" has been described as "le zèle de la gloire de Dieu, but sublime auquel elle tend de toutes ses forces, entravaillant au salut des âmes par l'éducation de la jeunesse."<sup>1)</sup> Some of them, as has been said, bound themselves more solemnly to this work by a fourth vow - "vacquer à l'instruction des petites filles."<sup>2)</sup> It was recognized in the Order that this was a work for which special preparation was required and the nuns were carefully trained to teach. This training might extend over a period of seven years, though part of that time would be spent in working under an experienced teacher in the classes. The system of class mistresses seems to have been the same as that in use at Saint-Cyr, and there is no doubt that there was a "maîtresse générale" in Ursuline schools long before Madame de Maintenon introduced that charge at Saint-Cyr, although she claims to have invented it.<sup>3)</sup>

There were two kinds of pupils in the schools, the boarders, who came from middle-class or aristocratic families, and day scholars, children of working people, who were educated

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1) Annales. 1<sup>re</sup> partie. § 1.

2) H. de Leymont. op. cit. ch. X.

3) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> I, p. 195. [In this "Entretien" M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon speaks of the "maîtresse générale" as "une charge que j'ai créée" - yet on the next page she says: "J'ai été aux Ursulines, et je me souviens que quand la maîtresse générale venait aux classes, c'était une nouvelle dont on parlait quinze jours devant..." ] cp. Renault. Les Ursulines de Rouen. ch. VIII. and Règlement des Religieuses Ursulines. Livre I. ch. 3.



free of charge. The latter learnt to read and write, and they were also instructed in their religion and taught various kinds of domestic and manual work.<sup>1)</sup> The boarders were educated in very much the same way as the girls of Saint-Cyr: they were divided into four classes, but not sub-divided into bands, nor were any given authority over the others, though they might be singled out for special duties. These peculiarly Saint-Cyrien institutions of bands and monitresses are both to be found, however, among the day scholars.<sup>2)</sup> The boarders received a good general education, according to the ideas of the time. Religious education and the training of character naturally occupied the most important place, but the training given was meant to be a preparation for the world and not for the cloister: the Règlements lay down carefully for the nuns their duty in this respect and say "Elles formeront les mœurs des filles à la bienséance et honnêteté commune des plus sages et vertueuses Chrétiennes qui vivent honorablement dans le siècle, se gardant d'y entremêler de ce qui est le propre de la vie religieuse ni au parler ni aux actions."<sup>3)</sup> They also define the minimum of instruction to be given - catechism, reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, composition and manual work<sup>4)</sup> - though it is

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1) Reneault. op. cit. ch. VIII.

2) They were sub-divided into bands of 10, having at their head a "dizainière". cp. Règlements. pt. II.

3) Constitutions. quoted by Leymont. op. cit. ch. XI.

4) Ibid. " " " " " ch. XVIII

probable that this was often exceeded. The pupils were not overworked: much was made of games and recreations and the specimen time tables which have survived show a wise proportion of work and play.<sup>1)</sup>

There are two respects in which the Ursuline schools seem to me to have been ahead of Saint-Cyr. In the first place, there was not that absolute separation from the family during the years of school life, which was such a weak point in Madame de Maintenon's system: the girls were allowed to see their parents in the parlour and to go home from time to time, and the family was regarded by the school more as an ally than as an enemy. Secondly, the physical conditions in the Ursuline convents were less Spartan than at Saint-Cyr. Madame de Maintenon's pupils were given everything that was necessary for their health, but they were brought up hardily, whereas the Ursulines allowed those little luxuries and comforts - such as hot water - which were lacking at Saint-Cyr. It is noticeable in this respect that, whereas at Saint-Cyr about eighty girls died in the first twenty years, there were only three or four deaths in the same period at the Ursuline convent of the rue St Jacques.<sup>2)</sup>

Connection  
between the  
Ursulines  
and S. Cyr.

a) Mme de  
Maintenon.  
b) Mme de  
Brinon.

In other respects, the resemblance between the Ursuline schools and Saint-Cyr was very great - so great, in fact, as to

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1) Règlements. - Reprinted as appendix to pt. I. of edition of Clermont-Ferrand. 1860.

2) op. Leymont. op. cit. ch. XVIII.

suggest that there was some connection between them. This connection came in various ways. First, Madame de Maintenon had been herself brought up by the Ursulines, first at Niort and then at the rue Saint-Jacques, so that she was at least bound to be acquainted with their educational system. Again, Madame de Brinon, who had so much to do with the early days of Saint-Cyr, was an Ursuline nun, as were her companions at Rueil and Noisy.

- c) ~~S. Cyrilles~~ Thirdly, many girls from Saint-Cyr entered Ursuline convents on leaving school, possibly attracted by the fact that it was a teaching order where they could use the talents discovered and trained by their work as monitresses or "noires" at Saint-Cyr.<sup>1)</sup>
- d) Writings of M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon. Finally, Madame de Maintenon's writings were undoubtedly known and studied by the Ursulines and constituted a real bond between them.

Of these,  
d) only suggests that Ursulines owed anything to S. Cyr.

Of these various links, the first two suggest that Saint-Cyr was rather the debtor than the creditor of the Ursulines. Madame de Maintenon certainly criticised her old teachers very freely, but it is quite possible that she rather forgot how much she owed to them, as, for example, in the case of the "maitresse generale" Madame de Brinon, for all her faults, yet directed the school for over ten years and the "Règlements" are largely her work and

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<sup>1)</sup> Various letters from M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon to girls and mistresses who had left S.Cyr to become Ursulines are to be found in Lettres Hist. I. (p. 317, 182, 354) etc. and others in the MSS. volume of the Bibliothèque Nationale. fonds fr. 15,200-nos. 1, 5, 6, 34, 40, 51: fonds. fr. 15,201. p. 5, 10.

it is more than likely that she introduced a decidedly Ursuline element into Saint-Cyr. On the other hand, there is no trace of the Saint-Cyriennes who subsequently became Ursulines having brought with them into their convent schools any innovations due to Madame de Maintenon. Thus, the only way in which Saint-Cyr can have influenced the Ursulines was through the writings of Madame de Maintenon and it is impossible to assess the extent of this influence. This, however, is what a staunch partisan of the Ursulines says of them:<sup>1)</sup> "Il est telle de leurs maisons (i.e. des maisons des Ursulines) où les écrits de Madame de Maintenon sont consultés et considérés comme une sorte de commentaire des constitutions de l'Ordre et gardent en matière, non d'instruction, mais d'éducation, une véritable autorité." "Par eux, il est juste de le dire, Madame de Maintenon a rendu d'un seul coup aux filles de Madame de Sainte-Beuve tout ce qu'elle leur avait emprunté." "Madame de Maintenon a fait à Saint-Cyr une oeuvre plus durable que Saint-Cyr lui-même et dont les Ursulines sont aujourd'hui les légitimes et naturelles héritières - les Lettres, les Entretiens, les Conseils..." Statements such as these are, naturally, too vague to be of any value as a proof, but they are an indication of the importance attached by the Ursulines to the writings of Madame de Maintenon.

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<sup>1)</sup>H. de Leymont, op. cit. ch. 17, 18.

Thus it would appear that the Ursuline schools cannot be reckoned in the Saint-Cyr tradition, for the traces of their being affected by Madame de Maintenon or her ideas are slight and indefinite. Nevertheless, their debt to Saint-Cyr may be greater than they think; for, by providing them with a rival and thus abolishing their monopoly over the education of girls of the upper classes, the Royal House may have prevented the Ursulines from relapsing into those abuses which they had been created to reform.

B.  
The Visitation.

Introd?  
Why chosen  
for exam?  
here?

1) many  
S. Cyriennes  
entered it.

The Ursulines were the great teaching order of that time, and, as we have seen, though there were certain resemblances between their educational system and that of Saint-Cyr, there was no conscious borrowing on one side or the other. The other teaching orders, such as the Dominicans or Benedictines, are of less importance here, for not many Saint-Cyriennes are known to have entered them.<sup>1)</sup> On the other hand, the lists give the names of about sixty girls who became Visitandines and in over forty cases tell which monasteries they entered as well. This is a large proportion and it is one reason why the order of the Visitation has been chosen for special investigation here:

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<sup>1)</sup> Fleury Vindry gives the names of 15 Benedictines and no Dominicans.

Detailed information possible from the Lettres Circulaires. the other is that, thanks to the preservation of the "Lettres Circulaires" or "Abrégés de la Vie et des Vertus" of so many Visitandine nuns, it is possible to know in detail what became of some of these "Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr" on leaving school, and to see how far they carried the principles of the education they had received into their new surroundings.<sup>1)</sup>

A. The influence of S. Cyr upon the Visitation schools was small.

After studying the question of the influence of Saint-Cyr upon the Visitandine schools the conclusion I have reached is that it was small, and that for three reasons. First, although schools were so often attached to its monasteries, the Visitation was not intended to be a teaching order. Secondly, even where the Visitandines can be shown to be directly indebted to Saint-Cyr for ideas which they used in their schools, they never adopted Madame de Maintenon's principles of education wholesale, but only selected such points as would fit into

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<sup>1)</sup> The material in this section has been mainly gathered from the "Lettres Circulaires de la Visitation Sainte Marie," copies of a few of which are to be found at the British Museum, and of a large number at the Bibliotheque Nationale. I have also received a great deal of help from nuns of the Visitation at Harrow, Annecy and especially at Angers, where the archivist searched the Lettres Circulaires in her possession and supplied various pieces of information which I believe to be unedited. I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to her and to all the others who have been so ready to help.

In the notes, I shall refer to the published Lettres Circulaires, merely quoting the name of the monastery from which it was written and the date. Anything taken from the unpublished sources I shall refer to as "MSS. Annecy", or "Angers" as the case may be.

their own customs. Lastly, as the Visitation was meant for people who were unfit for the austere life of stricter orders, it was a common refuge for delicate people, and many of the Saint-Cyriennes who entered it seem to have done so on the score of health, and not to have been strong enough even for the work of teaching when they were there. Nevertheless, there are certain important exceptions to the rule that the influence of Saint-Cyr upon the Visitation schools was small and they will be

Arguments  
leading to  
this con-  
clusion:-

a) Visitation  
not meant to  
be a teaching  
Order.  
examined in the second half of this section.

It is obvious that if the Visitandines were not intended to teach, but only took in a few pupils as an unimportant side-issue, they were not likely, as a whole, to be interested in Madame de Maintenon or Saint-Cyr. But is it true to say that they were not intended to teach? This question has been discussed in full in a book published anonymously in 1914 and called "La Visitation 1610-1910. Les Soeurs du Petit Habit et les Pensionnats", where the author shows convincingly, to my mind, that such was indeed the case.<sup>1)</sup> He quotes Saint François de Sales and Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, where these founders of the

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1) This idea, that the Visitation was intended primarily as a contemplative order, is supported by the preface to the MSS. volume of the Bib. Nat. "Histoire de la Vie de Plusieurs Religieuses de la Visitation S<sup>te</sup> Marie" (fonds fr. 3888) - "Il paraît bien que l'esprit de votre institut que vous avez hérité de François de Sales, votre saint fondateur, est de donner tout à la vie intérieure et aux choses spirituelles."

Order lay down explicitly that no one was to be admitted into the community under fifteen years of age and that the only teaching the nuns were to do was to instruct the village women and girls in their religion in the places where there were no Ursulines: they might also take in three or four girls, ten to twelve years old, as boarders, but no more - "pour ne pas troubler la quiétude du monastère". These girls were to follow as far as possible the ordinary life of the community and received less an education than a highly specialized training for entering the Order, of which they wore the "little habit" from their earliest days at school. Even in later years, when so many monasteries were compelled by poverty to take in boarders that the intentions of the Founder were almost forgotten, the girls still wore the "little habit" and the numbers received in each monastery were very small. They rarely exceeded twenty, and the average was nearer ten or twelve.<sup>1)</sup> When anything is said about them in the Lettres Circulaires, it is usually to tell how good and quiet they are and how little they disturb the

1) Figures taken from the Lettres Circulaires mention:-

2	cases where the number of pupils was between 40-50.
2	" " " " " " " " 30-40.
8	" " " " " " " " 20-30.
33	" " " " " " " " 10-20.
16	" " " " " " " " under 10.



rest of the community, for which the school is still regarded as a preparation.<sup>1)</sup>

b) It only borrowed what would fit in with its own rule and Constitutions. It follows from what has been said that Saint-Cyr rules and methods were not all suitable for adoption by the Visitandines in their schools. As Madame de Maintenon had foreseen, they had their own rules and customs and they only borrowed from Saint-Cyr such points as could be fitted into their own system. For example, at Saint-Cyr, which was made primarily for the girls, Madame de Maintenon insists that the mistresses should supervise their classes at all times, even in chapel: "Il faut ... qu'à la prière vous regardassiez si elles y ont de l'attention ... qu'à la messe vous couvriessiez les yeux quelques moments pour regarder celles que vous pouvez voir."<sup>2)</sup> The Rule of the Visitandines, on the other hand, bids them keep their eyes fixed on the ground. One would think that this rule would have to be modified as regards any teaching, but in any case it would be impossible for the nuns to exercise constant supervision over their pupils as Madame de Maintenon advised.

c) Many of the S. Cyriennes who entered it were delicate and unable to teach. There is no doubt that, in founding the Order of the Visitation, Saint François de Sales meant it especially for

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1) Lettres Circ. Paris. 1<sup>er</sup> monastère. 4 juillet 1730.  
The boarders are "de caractère à ne nous point causer d'embarras."

2) Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> II. p. 63.

those who were not strong enough to enter other, more austere, orders. Their manner of life was to be characterized less by bodily sufferings voluntarily undertaken than by utter obedience and yielding up of the whole will. Thus people wishing to enter it were not refused on the score of health, and it would seem that a good many of the girls from Saint-Cyr who became Visitandines did so because they were delicate. Of the fourteen Saint-Cyriennes, notices of whose lives I have found so far, one became blind,<sup>1)</sup> two died at the ages of twenty-eight and twenty-nine<sup>2)</sup> respectively, and another suffered from physical infirmities "qui nous ont empêchés de faire usage de ses talents, n'ayant pu l'employer qu'en qualité d'aide à l'infirmierie et à nos Demoiselles Pensionnaires."<sup>3)</sup> Naturally these figures prove nothing and the material is lacking for a conclusive answer to this question, but they are an indication that the influence of Saint-Cyr upon the Visitation schools was less than would be imagined from the numbers of Saint-Cyriennes who entered the Order,

1) L.C. Blois. 10 jan. 1753. Marie Madeleine de Gnereau.

2) MSS. Angers. Marie Hélène de Lallayne.  
L.C. Compiègne. 1712. Françoise Elizabeth de Péru de la Palaise.

3) L.C. Paris. 3<sup>e</sup> monastère. 1767. Angélique, Félicité de la Porte-Vesin.

for a certain number of them, at least, were too delicate to teach.

B. The extent of the influence of S. Cyr.

Having stated the main conclusion, that the influence of Saint-Cyr upon the Visitation schools was small, it is interesting to see what traces of it can be found at all. These are seen most strongly in two monasteries, Vienna and Strasbourg.

#### 1) Vienna

The community at Vienna was founded in 1717 by the Empress Amelia, and like Saint-Cyr it always enjoyed royal favour, for Maria Josepha and Maria Theresa showed a great interest in it too. The "Lettres Circulaires" of the monastery of Vienna are full of allusions to the bounties of the royal family and prayers for their preservation. Unlike most Visitandines, the nuns were obliged to teach by the terms of their foundation,<sup>1)</sup> and to help in starting this work the Empress persuaded two nuns from the monastery of Strasbourg to come to Vienna: they are described as "de très dignes sujets"<sup>2)</sup> and they had had experience in the school at Strasbourg. One of these continued as "maîtresse

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1) L.C. Vienne. 31 mars 1767. "Ns. rendons grâces à Dieu dans l'obligation où se trouve cette maison de vaquer à l'éducation des jeunes personnes, de nous avoir pourvues de sujets si capables ...."

2) L.C. Paris. 1<sup>r</sup> monastère. 1722.

des pensionnaires" until her death in 1752 and the only complaint made against her was that too many of her pupils married and too few became nuns.<sup>1)</sup>

Thus the school was started and soon became fashionable and flourishing: seventeen pupils, all of the highest rank, are mentioned in 1724, but by 1767 the numbers have increased to thirty-nine - "de la première naissance, la conduite de nos chères soeurs leurs maîtresses étant fort goûtée de la noblesse, qui s'exprime à leur confier leurs enfants, même des le plus petit âge."<sup>2)</sup>

These "chères soeurs, leurs maîtresses" were none else than three girls from Saint-Cyr, of whom two at least were destined to play a most important part in the history of the Visitation. These were Isabelle de Sales de Fosieres and Anne Lucie Constance de Lanfernat, and they were accompanied by a younger sister of Isabelle de Sales, Marie Josephe Emmanuelle de Fozières. They were all educated at Saint-Cyr, entered the Visitation monastery of the Rue Saint-Antoine at Paris as novices, took vows there in 1762 and were sent off to Vienna soon after, when the Empress Maria Theresa asked for nuns to help in the work

1) L.C. Vienne. 11<sup>r</sup> avril, 1734.

2) L.C.Vienne. 31 mars, 1767.

of education there.<sup>1)</sup> Before setting off, they went to say good-bye to the nuns of Saint-Cyr, "toutes trois ayant été élevées par ces Dames, et leur devant, après Dieu, tout ce qu'elles ont d'excellent," as the Circular Letter from Saint-Antoine explains.<sup>2)</sup> The community at Vienna were delighted with them and wrote of them thus: "ce sont d'excellens sujets, propres à remplir les intentions de notre grande Impératrice par la perfection de leur propre éducation, et par la diversité de leurs talents, d'ailleurs aimables par leurs qualités d'esprit et de coeur"<sup>3)</sup> - praise which would have rejoiced the heart of Madame de Maintenon.

On their arrival they were set to work at once in the school. Little is known of the younger Mademoiselle Fozzière, sister of the famous Isabelle de Sales, but this is what is said of her companion, Mademoiselle de Lanfernat: "Mademoiselle de l'Enferna, élève de Saint-Cyr, novice du monastère de Paris rue Saint-Antoine, où elle fit profession pour celui de Vienne (car ce fut une des soeurs demandées

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1) MSS. Annecy.

2) L.C. Paris. 1<sup>r</sup> monastère. 3 mai 1765.

3) L.C. Vienne. 2 mai 1765.

par l'Impératrice Marie Thérèse pour l'éducation des pensionnaires), ne se ménagea pas dans l'emploi de Maîtresse: elle le remplit un grand nombre d'années, mais sa mauvaise santé obligea ses Supérieures à l'en retirer. Assistante de la Communauté pendant six ans, élue Supérieure le 4 juin 1808 à l'âge de 68 ans, elle dut gouverner le monastère à une époque bien tourmentée, à l'heure où la guerre entre la France et l'Autriche s'était rallumée avec plus de fureur. Elle fit preuve d'un mâle courage qui émerveilla les soldats qui franchirent la clôture: 'Cette petite Supérieure', disaient-ils, faisant allusion à sa petite taille, 'est comme un Général.'<sup>1)</sup> She died while she was still in office in May, 1810.

The most outstanding of the three was Mademoiselle de Fosière. She was "maîtresse des pensionnaires" for seventeen years, that is to say, she was practically head-mistress of the school and would be able to introduce what she thought fit of the methods and practices of Saint-Cyr. From 1782 till 1788 she was Superior and was a favourite with the royal family - favour which stood her community in good stead. Her successor died in office and she was re-elected Superior in 1790.<sup>2)</sup> It was during this term of office

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1) MSS. Annecy.

2) MSS. Annecy.

that she helped to establish the exiled community of Lyon at Mantua and later at Venice, both of which establishments contained flourishing schools and hence are of interest to us here.

Mantua.

The story of the foundation of Mantua is given in a circular letter written by the Superior, Madame Verot, in 1794, and reads like a fairy-tale. The monastery of Bellecour at Lyon had been closed by the orders of the government, but some time before the nuns were finally dispersed the Superior received a letter asking her to found a monastery at Mantua "destiné à l'éducation des nobles Demoiselles de cette ville".<sup>1)</sup> The request had come in a very roundabout way. A special deputation had gone on some business from Mantua to Vienna and had admired the Visitation school there. They approached the Emperor to know how they could found one in their own town and he advised them to consult Madame de Fosière. She entered with the greatest interest into their schemes and wrote to the Superior of Strasbourg, who forwarded her request to Madame Verot at Lyon. This was not surprising, for nuns were wanted to start a new school, and those of Lyon were

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2)

L.C. Mantoue. 15 mai, 1794.

both used to the work of education and compelled to leave their old quarters.

In 1792 a suitable house had been found for them at Mantua and they set out in detachments on a most adventurous journey across the frontier. Finally all arrived safely and they settled down to their new work. Only five pupils are mentioned in 1794 but the next year the Circular Letter records that "Nous avons actuellement vingt demoiselles pensionnaires, des plus nobles familles de Mantoue et des principales villes d'Italie."<sup>1)</sup> Unfortunately, so little is said about the school that it is impossible to tell whether there was any trace of Saint-Cyr influence there. Personally, I think it is unlikely, as the only link between the two was Madame de Fosière and, though she is "notre très chère Mère .. qui mérite bien le titre de notre Fondatrice",<sup>2)</sup> and though she has "l'oeil toujours ouvert sur nous",<sup>3)</sup> she did not go to Mantua and I have not found any indication that she sent them advice on any educational problems.

Venise.

Not long after their establishment at Mantua, the community was obliged to move again, for the French armies were marching on their town. Madame de Fosière did all she

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1) L.C. Mantoue. 26 novembre, 1795.

2) Ibid. 15 mai, 1794.

3) Ibid. 26 novembre, 1795.



could to help them and sheltered them in her own community at Vienna until another house could be found for them.

While the exiles were at Vienna they elected their foundress Superior and when it was decided that they should go to Venice, she went with them and exercised the charge of Superior from 1801 till 1807.<sup>1)</sup>

Again, nothing is said about education, but there is no doubt that the community at Venice included a school and that the school lasted, for the Circular Letters tell how the Empress visited it in 1856 and how the pupils "la requrent en chantant en langue allemande l'hymne national, qui fut suivi de trois compliments récités par une demoiselle de chaque classe en français et en allemand."<sup>2)</sup>

Perhaps it would be fanciful to see in this any trace of Saint-Cyr influence, but the resemblance is obvious.

Such, then, was the story of the Visitandine school at Vienna which has been called "the only imitation of Saint-Cyr which succeeded and lasted for some time".<sup>3)</sup>

b) Strasbourg. Besides Vienna, Strasbourg was also famous for its school. At the end of the seventeenth century the Visitation monastery there was on the verge of ruin and it could not have continued to exist if Louis XIV had not come to

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<sup>1)</sup> MSS Angers.

<sup>2)</sup> L. C. Venise. 1857.

<sup>3)</sup> Taphanel. Le theatre de S.Cyr. ch. 15.

the rescue.<sup>1)</sup> He bought for the nuns the ancient abbey of Saint-Etienne, just outside the city; he laid down rules for the size of the community and so endowed it that it might be able to receive sixteen nuns without any dowry at all, and he obliged it by the terms of the foundation to receive and educate free of charge ten girls of noble family of Alsace and to admit as many fee-paying scholars as possible. Thus Louis founded the new community, but he did so at the prompting of Madame de Maintenon, as is explicitly stated in the circular letter written from Chaillot in 1701 and quoted above. Her connection with the new foundation is here established beyond a doubt, but it might almost have been arrived at even without this statement, both from the charge given to the nuns to teach, and from the connection of the new monastery with the old one at Chaillot, in which Madame de Maintenon had shown her interest ever since the reform of Saint-Cyr, and from which a superior was chosen and sent to Strasbourg.

On June 24th, 1701, four Visitandines set out from Paris to go to Strasbourg.<sup>2)</sup> One of these was the famous Madame Croiset who came from Chaillot and had been superior at Rouen from whence she was elected superior of the new community.

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1) L.C. Chaillot. 6 fév. 1701.

2) cp. Jovy. De Paris à Strasbourg. Voyage de Quatre Visitandines en 1701. (Paris 1911)

Two of them came from Paris itself, Madame de Lionne from the rue Saint Jacques and Madame du Tillet from the rue Saint-Antoine: the name of the fourth is not given in the same letter and we must come back to her later. They had an adventurous journey, which lasted from June 24th until July 14th. On their arrival they found Saint Etienne very far from habitable, but it was finally ready for them in October 1702, when they moved to their new quarters and the school was begun.

The school succeeded from the first. Little is said about what the girls were to be taught, beyond the fact that they were to be instructed "à la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine"<sup>1)</sup> (it must be remembered that Alsace was protestant), and that the nobility sent their daughters there "tant pour apprendre la langue française que pour être instruites à la piété."<sup>2)</sup> The numbers grew rapidly. In 1713, twenty pupils are mentioned: in 1729 we find: "Les demoiselles pensionnaires sont toujours en grand nombre et passent pour l'ordinaire celui de quarante-cinq, nous ne pouvons nous dispenser de les recevoir, étant toutes des enfants de distinction."<sup>3)</sup> There never seem to have been more than

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<sup>1)</sup> L. C. Chaillot. 6 fév. 1701.

<sup>2)</sup> L. C. Strasbourg. juin, 1710.

<sup>3)</sup> L. C. Strasbourg. 15 sep., 1729.

forty-nine, but this number was reached in 1757 and 1788. Moreover, they were of the highest rank: in 1755 there were no less than five princesses and several countesses and baronesses of the Empire there at once: the princess Sophie of Löwenstein, the countess of Linange, the princesses of Hesse Rheinfels and of Hohenlohe were all educated there at different times.<sup>1)</sup> Thus it was possible for the influence of the education given by the Visitandines at Saint-Etienne to be spread throughout the country, thanks to the high position which their pupils would occupy in after years.

It remains now to see whether there was any connection between Saint-Etienne and Saint-Cyr, beyond the general resemblance of the terms of their foundation and the patronage of Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon. I think that such a connection undoubtedly existed and that it came both through the nuns and through the "Règlements."

As has been said before, the idea of the new foundation was really suggested to the king by Madame de Maintenon. It seems equally clear that it was suggested to her in turn by the nuns of Chaillot, especially by Marie-Constance Gobert, who had acted as novice-mistress at Saint-Cyr during the Reform and for several years after. Now Madame de Maintenon writes in 1697: "J'avais reçu des compliments de ma soeur Marie-Constance qui m'avait fait croire que l'affaire des religieuses

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<sup>1)</sup>MSS. Angers and L.C. Strasbourg. 1729-1763 passim.

de Strasbourg était entièrement finie. J'en parlerai à Monsieur de Chamillard: les grandes choses lui font oublier les petites. On me demande souvent des demoiselles de Saint-Cyr. Elles ont de la peine à aller si loin; j'en ai pourtant fait offrir deux qui sont de bonnes filles".<sup>1)</sup> This supports the theory that Madame de Maintenon first heard of Strasbourg through Madame Gobert, and it also shows that she was asked to send helpers to the new school from Saint-Cyr. No further reference is made to these helpers either in the Letters of Madame de Maintenon or in the lists of the "Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr" nor would it be known whether any were actually sent but for a Circular Letter of the Visitandines dated December 1739.<sup>2)</sup> It tells of the death of Françoise Attale de Courteille, born in 1679 of a noble family of Normandy and brought up at Saint-Cyr, where Madame de Maintenon had been particularly interested in her and had advised her to enter the Visitation at Chaillot on leaving school. The next sentence is significant: "Comme elle avait une grande capacité pour l'éducation de la jeunesse, la Mère Marie-Louis Croiset ayant été élue Supérieure de Strasbourg crut ne rien faire de plus

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1) Corr. Gén. IV. p. 148.

2) MSS. Angers.

avantageux pour cette communauté que d'amener avec elle Made-  
moiselle de Courteille". This, then, was the fourth nun who  
went that famous journey from Paris to Strasbourg, and once  
there, full use was again made of her gift for teaching, for  
the letter goes on: "Employée auprès des jeunes demoiselles,  
elle y introduisit des méthodes et usages de Saint-Cyr ce qui  
pouvait convenir à un Monastère de la Visitation. Elle se  
livra avec zèle et affection aux soins et peines de son  
emploi, et Dieu la bénit par le succès. On lui confia  
ensuite pendant cinq ou six ans l'éducation des trois  
princesses d'Holstein, qu'on avait placées au Monastère."  
Something, therefore, of Saint-Cyr methods must have been brought  
to Strasbourg by Madame de Courteille.

It is possible that Madame de Maintenon also sent a copy  
of the "Règlements" of Saint-Cyr to Strasbourg and that they  
were adapted for use in the school there. A Circular Letter  
dated from Strasbourg, May 5th 1701, contains the following  
lines<sup>1)</sup> "Les grâces que Madame de Maintenon nous a obtenues  
ont passé immédiatement par les mains de notre très honorée  
Soeur Marie Constance Gobert pour être ensuite répandues sur  
notre communauté. Elle nous a encore donné une admirable  
preuve de sa piété et de ses lumières par les règlements  
qu'elle nous a envoyées pour l'éducation de nos demoiselles

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1) L. C. quoted in MSS. Angers.

pensionnaires. Chacun admire et estime cet ouvrage. Pour nous, nous le regardons comme un précieux trésor." This would be sufficiently clear, if it were certain that the "Elle" of the second sentence referred to Madame de Maintenon and not to Madame Gobert. Personally, I have little doubt that it does, both for reasons of grammar (for Madame de Maintenon is the important person in the first sentence, not Madame Gobert) and of general probability, for the "Règlements" of Saint-Cyr were famous and there is no mention elsewhere of any written by Madame Gobert. But even if the author were Madame Gobert, there is a very strong probability that the "Règlements" would be based on those of Saint-Cyr, for we know that its educational system was admired by Madame Gobert and her companions who had been called in to help at the time of the Reform.<sup>1)</sup>

c) Other monasteries. Vienna and Strasbourg were the most important of the Visitandine schools, for they were attached to the only two monasteries of the Order which, by the terms of their foundation, had received a definite charge to teach. But the greater number of the other monasteries received a few pupils, and the Circular Letters contain several examples of Saint-Cyriennes being employed in the Visitandine schools and handing down the education which they had received.

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<sup>1)</sup> L'Année Sainte des Religieuses de la Visitation Ste Marie, tome III p. 797.

Blois.

For example, the lists <sup>1)</sup> give the names of four girls who went from Saint-Cyr to the Visitation at Blois, all of whom are mentioned in the Circular Letters. <sup>2)</sup> Of these, two sisters, Mesdemoiselles de Saint-Etienne, are not spoken of at all in connection with teaching: a third, Mademoiselle de Guerreau, was "aide aux pensionnaires" until she became blind, but the fourth, Mademoiselle d'Abancourt, had a good deal to do with the school. This is what is said of her in this connection: "Elle fut ensuite officière et on mit en usage les talents qu'elle avait pour l'éducation de la jeunesse, dont elle a été plusieurs fois maîtresse; elle les élevait et les cultivait avec soin, les formait à la piété et leur apprenait tout ce qui convient à de jeunes personnes". Nuns such as Mademoiselle d'Abancourt would carry out no root and branch reform of their convent, but through them the principles of Saint-Cyr education would none the less permeate the classes which they taught.

Périgueux.

Another Saint-Cyrienne who left a name for education in the Circular Letters of the Visitation was Marie Adelaïde de Bardon de Segonzac, who was first of all at Montargis, then at Périgueux, then superior at Saint-Céré, and finally back again

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<sup>1)</sup> i.e. Fleury Vindry. "Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr."

<sup>2)</sup> L.C. Blois. 18 jan. 1699, 1742, 10 jan., 1758.



at Périgueux where she died in 1757. The announcement of her death says: "On connut d'abord son talent pour l'éducation de la jeunesse; on la nomma maîtresse des pensionnaires, charge qu'elle a exercée pendant douze ans, avec un zèle et une charité infatigables, surtout à l'égard des filles de la campagne qui ne savaient rien". Later, she became novice mistress and then superior - both influential positions, but less directly concerned with education.<sup>1)</sup>

Poitiers.

The Circular Letters give a short notice of a girl who was educated at Saint-Cyr, but whose name does not appear on the lists of the "Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr". She was Thérèse-Adelaide de la Poupardière and she had the chance of handing on something of what she had learnt at Saint-Cyr, for she was employed at Poitiers to teach three demoiselles de Blessac, "auxquelles," says the Letter,<sup>2)</sup> "elle communiqua les principes de l'éducation qu'elle avait reçue". As one of her pupils became a nun in her turn and taught in her convent at Rennes, it is possible that the seed was scattered still farther afield and bore more fruit than even Madame de Maintenon had ever imagined possible.

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1) L.C. Périgueux. 1757.

2) MSS. Angers.

Conclusion - More examples could be given of Saint-Cyriennes being  
 S. Cyr gained employed as teachers in the schools attached to the  
 as much as it gave. Visitandine monasteries which they had entered, but, though  
 interesting, they do not affect the conclusion which was  
 reached at the beginning - namely, that Saint-Cyr exerted only  
 a small influence on education through the Visitation.  
 Certain monasteries, such as those which we have mentioned,  
 benefited by its experience and copied it in part: still  
 more were helped by the personal influence and protection  
 of Madame de Maintenon in other matters than education.<sup>1)</sup> But  
 that is the whole extent of its debt to Saint-Cyr. In one way  
 Saint-Cyr gained as much as it gave: for not only was the  
 Reform conducted by the nuns of the Visitation of Chaillot,  
 but the book which was universally read at Saint-Cyr and formed  
 the subject of so many instructions was none other than the  
 "Introduction à la Vie Dévote" of Saint François de Sales,  
 the founder of the Order of the Visitation.<sup>2)</sup>

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1) cp. L.C. Chaillot. 6 fév. 1701.  
 " " 6 fév. 1706.  
 " Compiègne. 1693.  
 " Paris. 1<sup>r</sup> monastere. 1 fév. 1697.  
 " " 2<sup>e</sup> " 1694. etc.

2) cp. Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé... ch. 26.  
 Lettres ... sur l'éduc.<sup>n</sup> I, p. 85-86.  
 Lettres hist. I, p. 479-80 etc.

6.  
Schools.

Under the general heading of convents might have been included a number of smaller establishments, to which we must now turn our attention. They lie half-way between the "School" has to be distinguished from the convent schools considered above. On the other hand, the teachers, in all of those which come under our survey here, either were, or had been, nuns. But, on the other hand, we are no longer dealing here with a whole Order, but perhaps with one house only within an order, where girls were educated in a manner which showed traces of the influence of Saint-Cyr. For example, the teachers at the school founded by Madame de Roquemartine at Arles were a few nuns of the order of the Saint-Enfant-Jésus and this school bears a resemblance to Saint-Cyr and comes within the scope of this study in a way in which others of the same order do not. It seemed, therefore, advisable to distinguish between the previous group and foundations such as this, and to class the latter together here under the title of "schools".

Chronological order will be followed. The order followed in the consideration of such schools is, roughly, chronological. They belong for the most part to the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth century, the earliest dating from about 1710 and the latest from nearly a century after. The evidence, never as full as could be desired, is sometimes very scanty, but I have set down here such information about them as I have been able to collect from the sources indicated in the footnotes.

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(1)  
Poitiers.

Source -  
article of  
M. Pouliot.

In a small pamphlet, thirteen pages long, published at Poitiers in 1920 and entitled "Une Succursale de Saint-Cyr à Poitiers au Dix-huitième Siècle" the author has made out an interesting case for the existence there about 1715 of a school in the Saint-Cyr tradition. Although I have no fresh evidence to add to his, it will be well, perhaps, to set down here the facts from which he draws his conclusions and the arguments he uses: for the pamphlet is little known and no mention is made of Poitiers even by the historians of Saint-Cyr who were interested in its tradition.<sup>1)</sup>

Evidence he  
adduces for  
existence of  
a S. Cyr  
school at  
Poitiers.

It must be admitted that the evidence for the existence of such a school is slight and that nothing whatever is known about its history, the education given there, or the personnel, whether teachers or pupils. The hypothesis is based upon three documents, unrelated in themselves, which shed an interesting light upon one another when placed in juxtaposition. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the abbot of Saint-Jouin de Marnes decided to sell part of the property of the Abbey, a tumble-down house called the Barbaste. The house was bought by the "Bureau des Petites Ecoles du Diocèse de Poitiers" on December 30th, 1710, and one of the signatories to the act of acquisition was the

a) connection  
with Mgr. de  
la Foye de  
Vertrieux.

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<sup>1)</sup>E.g. Lavallée or Fleury Vindry. "S. Cyr au temps de Louis XV" in "Au Déclin de L'Ancien Regime." Compigny des Bordes de Villiers de l'Isle Adam. 1924.

Bishop, Monseigneur de la Poype de Vertrieux.

The second document is a paragraph in the register of tithes, under the date of October 14th, 1711, where the

b) connection following entry occurs: "Suit le logis des Filles de with Madame de Puisieux. l'Instruction Chrétienne qui fut à l'abbé de Saint-Jouin.

Dame Anne de Puisieux a déclaré le 14 avril 1711 qu'elle a paye cent livres de location au Sieur abbé de Saint-Jouin."

Neither of these entries would be likely to arouse any suspicion of a connection between the school at Poitiers and Saint-Cyr, except in the mind of someone who was steeped in the history of Madame de Maintenon and her foundation. The third document, however, provides a more obvious clue. It is

c) Mention of merely an act of sale of some property in the village of "Les Dames de Saint Cyr". Cellevais, dated May 4th, 1713, where the seller is

described as "Françoise Girouard, fille de Jean, maître sculpteur et de Marie Roy, demeurant à Poitiers en la communauté des Dames de Saint Cyr, au logis de Barbaste."

Arguments for these being same as "Dames de St Louis" at the Royal House.

This is all the material that lay to the hand of M. Pouliot and it must be allowed that he makes good use of it. Turning his attention first to this last entry, he makes out a strong case for a connection between the "Dames de Saint Cyr" mentioned there and the original foundation at Versailles. For the foundation at Versailles was the only congregation of Saint-Cyr

known in the eighteenth century, and the probability is strengthened farther by the use of the word "Dames", the name by which the nuns of Saint-Cyr were always known. In answer to the objection that the official title of the latter was "Dames de Saint-Louis" and not "Dames de Saint-Cyr", it is argued, plausibly enough, that the notary is writing under the dictation of one of their pupils, who would be quite likely to overlook their official title and only to remember that they were called "Dames" and belonged to the congregation of Saint-Cyr.

Presumption  
made still  
more probable  
by connection

1) between  
Mgr. de la  
Poype de  
Vertrieux  
and M<sup>me</sup> de  
Maintenon.

The connection suggested thus is rendered still more probable by the fact that the Bishop of Poitiers was Monseigneur de la Poype de Vertrieux and that he was one of those who signed the deed when the Barbaste was bought for a school.<sup>1)</sup> For, first, he is known to have been interested in education and to have founded schools in his diocese, for which he drew up the statutes and even wrote a spelling book. Moreover, he was a friend of Madame de Maintenon: some even say that he owed his bishopric at Poitiers to her, and he certainly came to thank her when she was at Saint-Cyr.

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<sup>1)</sup> Mémoire de la société des Antiq. de l'Ouest. 2<sup>e</sup> série. t. XI. année 1888. p. 65. "Un évêque de Poitiers au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle" par M. Paulze d'Ivoy de la Poype, espec. ch. 1, 7, 10.

Of this visit the "Mémoires des Dames de Saint-Louis" record:  
 "Ils entrèrent tous trois dans la maison et la visitèrent avec  
 Madame de Maintenon, qui fut bien aise de la faire voir à  
 Monseigneur de Poitiers. Il fit attention à tout et se  
 recria fort sur tout ce qu'il vit, principalement sur l'ordre  
 des classes, et la manière noble et chrétienne dont on  
 élevait les demoiselles."<sup>1)</sup> Again, two of his sisters were  
 educated at Saint-Cyr. One of them entered the Visitation  
 when her school days were over, but the other stayed on at  
 Saint-Cyr and finally rose to the position of superior and died  
 in office in 1715. What would be more natural, then, than  
 that he should help to establish in his diocese that form  
 of education which he so manifestly approved?

2) between M<sup>re</sup>  
 de Puisieux  
 and M<sup>re</sup> de  
 Maintenon.

Finally, the name of Madame de Puisieux, who appears from  
 the second entry to have been either superior or patroness  
 of the school at the Barbaste, strengthens the connection.  
 For it appears, from the diary of the abbe Augier de la  
 Terraudiere, that she knew Madame de Maintenon and could at  
 times exercise some influence over her. This is what is said  
 of her: "A la Toussaint, 1708, Monsieur l'abbé Maboul ... a  
 été nommé à l'évêché d'Aleth. On ne peut nier qu'il ait

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<sup>1)</sup> Mémoires de ce qui s'est passé..... ch. 27.

d'excellentes qualités .. mais .. le désordre où son jeu l'avait jeté ... ne laissait pas lieu d'espérer qu'il fut élevé à cette dignité, qu'il doit au bien que Madame de Puisieux dit de lui à Madame de Maintenon dans un voyage qu'elle venait de faire à Paris". This proves nothing, of course, but it shows that someone who was closely connected with the school at Poitiers was also sufficiently friendly with Madame de Maintenon to be believed, at least, to influence her in matters of great importance.

Here the evidence ceases and we are left merely with a growing conviction that there once was a school at Poitiers modelled on the pattern of Saint-Cyr. Some day, perhaps, the connection will be proved beyond a doubt and we shall know not only that it existed, but also what it was like.

(ii)  
Arles.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there existed at Arles a small school,<sup>1)</sup> formed on the model of Saint-Cyr, about which more is known than about the Barbaste at Poitiers. This was La Providence, founded by Madame de Roquemartine in 1731.

School founded  
by Mlle. de  
Grille - her  
life.

The foundress, Marie Catherine de Grille was born in 1654 and her father, Antoine Gaspard de Grille was "maître

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<sup>1)</sup> Sources - notes supplied by M. l'abbé Marcellan Chaillan, author of an unpublished monograph: "Une imitation de Saint-Cyr en Provence: La Providence d'Arles".

Among his authorities he cites the Archives Hospitalières of Arles and the "Histoire des Religieuses du Saint-Enfant-Jésus" by Père Henri de Grèzes.

All the quotations are taken from these notes.



d'hôtel" to the king. Thus she was brought up at court and she had certainly visited Saint-Cyr, but she does not seem to have been educated there herself. In 1672 she married the Marquis de Roquemartine, but they had no children. So when her husband died, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, she retired to Arles, where she devoted herself and her house to the work of the "Filles de la Providence de Marie" as a school for girls. Presently she handed her house over by deed to the school, whose formal foundation thus dates from 1731. She herself died six years later.

Aim.

The aim of the school was to educate about thirty girls of good family and to teach them not only the kind of learning that can be had from books, but also housewifery and sewing. In this work, Madame de Roquemartine was helped by three nuns Teachers. belonging to the order founded by Père Barré and known as the "Maîtresses Charitables du Saint-Enfant-Jésus", or, more simply, as the Dames de Saint-Maur. One of these took charge of the class teaching and another of the domestic training of the girls. Later, their number was found to be insufficient, and a fourth was added in 1782 "pour apprendre aux élèves toutes sortes d'ouvrages utiles et nécessaires dans l'intérieur d'une famille". To her or to one of the others

would fall the duty of inspecting the girls' belongings to make sure they were kept tidily, for tidiness was both "useful and necessary in the home".

#### Girls.

The girls were thirty in number and about three hundred passed through the school during the sixty years of its existence. They came at the age of twelve and stayed till they were eighteen. In accordance with the expressed wish of the foundress, they had to belong to good families of Arles, though sometimes children of the labouring classes were admitted too, especially after 1789. To be admitted, they had to be nominated by the archbishop on the recommendation of the "governing body", and preference was given to those in difficult circumstances. If they were withdrawn for any reason before they had completed their time they could not be re-admitted, but those who stayed till they were eighteen made their own trousseau before leaving and were also given one hundred and fifty francs when they set up house.

#### Conditions of admission.

#### Dowry on leaving.

#### Time-table.

The following quotation will show how their days were spent: "D'après le règlement de 1750, les élèves, de Saint-Michel à Paques, se levaient à 6 heures. Elles avaient une demie-heure pour leur toilette. Après elles descendaient à

la chapelle où elles entendaient la messe. A huit heures elles allaient à l'ouvrage ou bien en classe. A onze heures, elles dînaient, et pendant le repas, à tour de rôle, elles faisaient la lecture. La récréation de midi était prise en commun. A une heure et demi, reprise du travail et de la classe. De trois heures à quatre heures et quart, leçon de catéchisme, puis goûter et travail en silence jusqu'à cinq heures et demie. Ensuite, exercices de piété à la chapelle: chapelet, pieuse lecture, et même méditation par les élèves qui en étaient capables. A six heures et quart, le souper, lecture comme à midi, et récréation jusqu'à huit heures et demie. Avant le coucher les élèves se rendaient à la chapelle pour faire la prière en commun et l'examen de conscience. De Pâques à Saint Michel, le lever était à cinq heures."

Education: This quotation is sufficient in itself to show that

- a) religious religious training was kept well in the foreground. The girls were encouraged to make frequent use of the sacraments and there was a confessor attached to the school, who was chosen very carefully. They were also taught to read Latin, the language of the church, and the daily catechism lessons were interspersed with hymns. Religion was the basis of

everything at La Providence, and good manners - which should be the natural result of such a training - were carefully taught and insisted upon too.

b) intellec-  
tual.

The girls' time, however, was not wholly taken up by religious exercises and instruction, or domestic training. They were also taught the ordinary subjects of the school-curriculum of these days and we can tell not only what they learned, but also something about how it was taught. They learned reading, writing, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, and they also memorized passages which they recited on "prize day" before the parents and friends of the school. To quote again from the same source: "On apprenait à lire le français d'abord sur des ardoises ou de grandes cartes, puis dans des livres et enfin dans des menus écrits. L'écriture s'enseignait par des exemples renfermant quelque maxime instructive ou morale. On faisait tracer aux écolières les lettres les plus faciles, puis les lettres à boucles; enfin on apprenait à joindre ces lettres, puis à former des mots et des phrases. La maîtresse tenait la main des commençantes et conduisait leur plume; elle écrivait en leur présence et donnait des exemples appropriés à leur degré d'avancement, avant de leur livrer des cahiers avec modèles burinés. Pour l'orthographe, l'exercice préféré était la dictée à petite dose, que l'on donnait plusieurs fois de suite pour diminuer

les fautes. L'explication des éléments de grammaire accompagnait ces leçons. L'arithmétique commençait à s'apprendre au moyen de jetons. On multipliait les exercices de calcul; bientôt les opérations de tête suivaient; enfin on se servait de la plume. Les quatre règles et leurs preuves, quelques problèmes faciles composaient tout le bagage scientifique des pensionnaires de l'école."

Special  
features -  
emulation.

Among the features of the educational system in force at La Providence might be mentioned the use made of emulation: marks, places of honour, special duties assigned as privileges, and prizes were all used. Prizes, in particular, occupy an important place, especially after 1782. Maltese crosses were given to the two best pupils and other prizes included books, silver scissors in a case, powder boxes, white satin writing cases and even lace and neck kerchiefs! Such a list suggests that worldliness was not altogether banished from the little school, and the same impression is confirmed when we read that, although there was a uniform which every girl was supposed to wear, there was great difficulty in seeing that this rule was kept: "Les parents" says the Abbé Bonnemant, a

contemporary writer, "malgré les plaintes et la réclamation des prelates qui ont siégé à Arles depuis la fondation de l'oeuvre, fournissent des parures et ajustments qui tendent à leur donner du goût pour la vanité, et il y a toujours des combats à livrer pour empêcher que les règles de la modestie ne soient pas ouvertement violées". They were well looked after from all points of view: and, while we would expect the constant supervision of their behaviour which was in fact the rule there, it is more surprising to find that not only was there a doctor attached to the school to look after the health of the girls, but there was also a school surgeon and a school apothecary.

Supervision.

Care of health.

End of the school.

The school came to an end in 1795. A change had been made in 1792, when the Dames de Saint-Maur were replaced as teachers by old girls of the school. But that was not enough to avert the storm that threatened it and it was suppressed as being "contraire à l'égalité".

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(iii)  
Luçon.

It is possible that in the course of the eighteenth century a number of little schools were started in France under the name of "Petit Saint-Cyr", which had no connection with

the real Saint-Cyr, but borrowed its name to show that they were "Select Boarding Establishments for Young Ladies." This is only a conjecture. There is, however, one "Petit Saint-Cyr" which has a better claim to descent from the original foundation, though its founder had no connection with Madame de Maintenon (as appears to have been the case at Poitiers and at Arles), nor was it started by ex-Dames de Saint-Louis, like the schools at Honfleur and Orléans, which will be considered later.

Life of the  
founder.

This school was the Petit Saint-Cyr of Luçon, founded about 1780 by Andre Brumauld de Beauregard, "Vicaire-Général" of Luçon.<sup>1)</sup> Both André and his brother, Jean, were well-known figures of those days. They were born, André in 1745 and Jean in 1749, of a noble family and were educated by the Jesuits and then at Saint-Sulpice. They were famous in the Church for their various activities and both suffered in the Revolution; but while the younger escaped with his life after having been deported, André was guillotined in 1794. Lately all

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<sup>1)</sup> Sources. (a) Le Petit Saint-Cyr de Luçon. Jean Brumauld de Beauregard (preface d'André Britton, 1888. Extrait de l'Annuaire de la Société d'Emulation de la Vendée. Brochure tirée à 100 exemplaires). Pub. à La Roche-sur-Yon. 1888.

(b) Document communiqué par les Dames de la Retraite du Sacre-Coeur tiré de la monographie de Beauregard par le Chanoine Boutin, de Luçon.

his writings have been collected for his "procès de béatification", and it is from them as well as from the account written by his brother that comes all that we have been able to discover about the "Petit Saint-Cyr" of Luçon.

Importance of  
the foundation.

The following quotation will show that the foundation of the school is to be considered as one of the most remarkable things which the abbé accomplished in his lifetime: "Une des oeuvres les plus importantes d'André de Beauregard fut la fondation, vers 1781, du 'Petit Saint-Cyr', maison d'éducation pour les jeunes filles de la noblesse, de la bourgeoisie et même du peuple. Dans une éducation sagement nuancée sous un toit commun, le rapprochement des classes devait se préparer d'une manière toute chrétienne pour le plus grand bien de la contrée. Le règlement élaboré par l'abbé de Beauregard est un modèle de compréhension d'une éducation profondément religieuse, en même temps que proportionnée aux besoins moraux et matériels des différents groupes de jeunes filles qui étaient appelées à la recevoir."<sup>1)</sup>

While one can agree with the writer of the passage just quoted as to the importance of the foundation, there might be some difference of opinion on the question of why it was

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<sup>1)</sup> Document communiqué... cp. b) supra.



Aim.

important, and one doubts whether it really bridged the gulf between the classes at all, or whether it was even meant to, especially when we are told that there was a special school for the girls of the labouring class, where they were trained for housework alone. André de Beauregard founded his school to meet the needs of the noble families of La Vendée, whose daughters were growing up in ignorance at home, and taking part in all sorts of social functions - some of which were far from suitable for them - for there was nowhere for them to be sent. The convents in the district preferred rich bourgeois to impoverished aristocrats. The aim of the Petit Saint-Cyr was to provide some place where the latter could be brought up in religious surroundings, where their intellectual level could be raised and they could be trained to look after the home and sent back "ainsi formées dans leurs familles, pour leur faciliter des alliances avantageuses."<sup>1)</sup> Soon the school contained eighty pupils, mainly of the class for which it was intended, though there were also admitted the daughters "de ceux, qui sans être nobles, occupaient un rang distingué dans le monde."<sup>2)</sup> The places were not all free, as at Saint-Cyr, but bursaries were given to enable those to come who could not pay the fees, and we

Pupils.

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1) Le Petit Saint-Cyr de Luçon. Préface.

2) Le Petit Saint-Cyr de Luçon.

hear of the noble families of Poitou and Brittany vying with one another to receive one of these coveted places at the abbé de Beaurégard's school.

Difficulties.

a) money

There were considerable difficulties to be overcome at the foundation, of which the greatest were the lack of money and of suitable teachers. The former was overcome at last and the abbé raised from various sources, which included the royal

b) teachers.

bounty, a sum of 40,000 livres down and a further 49,000 as an annual income. When it came to finding teachers he appealed first of all to the Ursulines of Luçon, who did not feel able to undertake the work and refused. He then turned to the secular congregation founded by Madame de Miramion, les Filles de l'Union Chrétienne, and unfolded his plan to them and invited them to come. They had two houses at Luçon and a third at Sables d'Olonne where they devoted themselves to education, but they decided to accept, even though, in accordance with the conditions drawn up by the abbé, this meant sending away their boarders, giving up the house at Sables d'Olonne altogether and joining the two at Luçon into one. Four or five of them accordingly entered upon a noviciate for their new work and, accepting the last of the abbé's conditions, made a serious study of methods of education

and abandoned themselves entirely to Providence and to their founder. Thus money and teachers were found and the work of the school could begin.

#### Time-table.

The way in which the day was arranged is described in "L'ordre des exercices de pensionnat."<sup>1)</sup> There we learn that when all the time necessary had been allowed for rising and going to bed, for meals, for religious exercises and for recreation, "on consacrait le reste de la journée à l'étude, aux travaux manuels, à l'écriture, à la lecture, aux histoires saintes de l'Eglise de France, aux principes de la langue française, au dessin, aux musiques vocale et instrumentale."

#### Curriculum.

Printed books were used as little as possible for lessons, but the pupils were encouraged to think and ask about what they were taught and to write notes for themselves, for much care was expended on teaching them to write well. Their domestic education included cooking, sewing, mending, housekeeping and some notion of medicine and nursing. Finally, it was considered necessary for girls in their position to cultivate the "arts d'agrément", so in addition to music and art they were also taught dancing, but only in recreation time, not as a regular lesson.

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<sup>1)</sup>Quoted by M.A. Bitton in the preface.

Points of  
resemblance  
with S. Cyr.

There are several points in which the Petit Saint-Cyr seems to have imitated Madame de Maintenon's foundation. At Luçon the girls all had a black uniform and they were divided into three classes, each distinguished by a different colour: the lowest division was the Red class; then came the Blue and the Purple. Again, as at Saint-Cyr, there was a picked band to whom a special ribbon was given and who went by the name of the "comité secret". The conditions of admission and the duties of this "comité" were much the same as those of the Blacks, of whom Madame de Maintenon writes so much, and they seem to have proved their worth at Luçon, for it is said of them: "Ce moyen, peu employé jusqu'alors dans l'éducation publique, produisit d'excellents effets."<sup>1</sup>) The abbé also set up a "bureau" of administration, corresponding to the "Conseil du Dehors" at Saint-Cyr. Lastly, recreations were held in as great honour at the daughter as at the mother school: Sunday was in especial a fête day, when the gardener provided all the pupils with nosegays and when parents and friends from outside were admitted to the evening recreations. Taken all together, these resemblances are sufficient to arouse a suspicion of some connection between Luçon and Saint-Cyr, though it is probably true

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<sup>1</sup>) Jean de Beauregard. Le Petit S. Cyr de Luçon.

to say that life at the former was simpler and happier and the government more maternal than at the original foundation.

Connection  
with S. Cyr.

More resemblance, however, is not sufficient evidence for including Luçon in the Saint-Cyr tradition: there must be a more definite connection between the two than that. The name, Petit Saint-Cyr, immediately springs to one's mind and one asks how it came to be given to the school. The answer is that it was given it by one of the most regular attendants at the Sunday evening reunions, an old lady of eighty-eight, Mademoiselle de Fresnes, who was a great favourite with the girls and who had been brought up at Saint-Cyr. She used to tell them stories of her own school days and she would say to them: "Sortons du cercle; nous y rentrerons ensuite, et je vous montrerai comment nous saluons à Saint-Cyr."<sup>1</sup>) But the real connection lies in the fact that, before founding his school, the abbé de Beauregard considered very carefully the methods and rules of the best known educational institutions of his time and went to Paris with the object of finding out more about them. It was then that his attention was drawn to Saint-Cyr, and a copy of the "Règlements" of Madame de Maintenon has been preserved among the documents submitted in his "procès de béatification."

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<sup>1</sup>) Jean de Beauregard. Le Petit S. Cyr de Luçon.

Last years.

The school flourished for over ten years. According to one writer its influence for good was not confined within its own walls: "En peu de temps", writes Jean de Beauregard, "Luçon changea de face. Cette maison devint et l'exemple et la famille du pays." Families even came from a distance and settled in the town to be near the school. The Revolution brought this happy state of affairs to an end. As early as 1790 the Petit Saint-Cyr was in danger of being closed by the law suppressing religious communities. But, partly because the nuns were not bound by solemn vows, partly because the municipality of Luçon interceded on their behalf and spoke of the benefits conferred by the foundation upon all classes of citizens, it went on till 1792. In March of that year, André de Beauregard was imprisoned and the school was closed, for the nuns had refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Constitution demanded of them as public servants. Most of the pupils were sent back to their homes, but about twenty of them found a refuge in the house of Monsieur de Chevigné, brother of the superior, from whence Jean took back news of them for the last time to his brother in prison, from whose thoughts the school was never far absent. In one of his last letters he writes: "Puisse ma famille chérie, qui fut pour nous l'objet de tant de soins, recevoir aussi l'expression de mes tendres

sentiments. Je n'ai jamais douté de son attachement.<sup>1)</sup> Je recommande à son souvenir celui qui ne cessa de s'occuper d'elle." The troubles of La Vendée dealt the final blow and nothing more is heard of the foundation after 1794.

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(iv)  
Honfleur.  
Natural for  
the Dames de  
S. Louis to  
start little  
schools when  
S. Cyr was  
closed.

In 1793, as we have already seen, Saint-Cyr was closed, the pupils sent home and the nuns scattered. It must have been a difficult question for many of these to know how they were to live. No doubt all who could went back to their families, but there must have been many for whom this was impossible, and as there were no religious communities left which they could enter it is not surprising to find some of them at least putting their training in teaching to good account and opening schools. It is not too much to claim for such schools a place in the educational tradition inherited from Madame de Maintenon, even though very little is known about them. The ladies in charge of them had a first-hand knowledge of Saint-Cyr ways and of none else. Whatever modifications they may have introduced in practice the source of their inspiration was Saint-Cyr.

Possible that  
one such was  
established

There seems to have been such a school at Honfleur at the very beginning of the nineteenth century. Madame Commanville

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<sup>1)</sup> quoted by M.A. Bitton in his preface.

at Honfleur. writes in the "Souvenirs Intimes" of Gustave Flaubert, which Referred to in Souvenirs form the introduction to the Edition Conard of his correspond- Intimes de Flaubert by ence: "Le docteur Fleuriot (i.e. Flaubert's grandfather) se Commenville. voyant mourir confia sa fille à deux anciennes maîtresses de Saint-Cyr qui tenaient à Honfleur un petit pensionnat. Ces dames promirent de la garder jusqu'à son mariage, mais elles ne tardèrent pas aussi à disparaître."<sup>1)</sup> Can any trace of them be found before the school entirely disappears?

Flaubert's mother was educated there, but tradition says he describes her school in "Un cœur simple". Thus, what he says there refers to the pensionnat of the dames de S. Cyr.

Now, it is a well established tradition at Honfleur and indeed among all students of Flaubert that the school spoken of in "Un Cœur Simple" had its counterpart in real life in the school to which Madame Flaubert was sent as a child, that is to this little boarding-school kept by the ex-nuns of Saint-Cyr. Thus Sorel, in his "Pages Normandes", writes that Caroline Fleuriot was "élève à Honfleur en un pensionnat de la haute ville (décrit dans 'Un Cœur Simple')." <sup>2)</sup> "Described" is too strong a word: very little in fact is said about it and in considering this due allowance must be made for the fact that "Un Cœur Simple" is essentially a work of fiction. It is nevertheless interesting to recall what is to be found there. Madame Aubain, as it will be remembered, "voulait faire de sa

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1) Flaubert. Correspondance. Edition Conard 1910. Introd. tome I, p. XI.

2) A. Sorel. Pages Normandes, p. 47.



fille une personne accomplie; et, comme Guyot ne pouvait lui montrer ni l'anglais ni la musique, elle résolut de la mettre en pension chez les Ursulines d'Honfleur." As far as music was concerned, Virginie was no better off than before, for she soon had to give up her piano lessons on account of her health. Her mother came to see her every week and they walked together in the garden with its view over the river mouth from Tancarville to Le Havre. The last glimpse of the school is given when, on hearing that Virginie is dangerously ill, Madame Aubain sets off at once to see her, followed next day by Félicité, who hurries up the "ruelle escarpée" where the school is situated, only to hear the bell of the church of Saint-Léonard tolling for Virginie's death.<sup>1)</sup>

The school is mentioned in the census list of 1806.

Turning now from fiction to fact<sup>2)</sup> I was allowed, by the kindness of M. Vintras, archivist of Honfleur, to consult the "Registre du Conseil Municipal" and the "Copie de Lettres envoyées", but though there are frequent references there to various private

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<sup>1)</sup>Flaubert. *Trois Contes*, ed. Charpentier, 1926, pp. 34, 42, 49, 51.

<sup>2)</sup>Sources: Archives municipales de Honfleur:-  
 Registre du Conseil municipal, 1808-1813.  
 Copie de Lettres envoyées, 1805-1810.  
 Recensements, 1791, 1806, 1816.  
 Table des Actes de décès, 1803-1822.

I am greatly indebted to M. Vintras, not only for his kindness in putting all these at my disposal, but also for the sidelights he threw on them, especially on the families of the Normandin, the Croixmare and the Grémonville, and for his co-operation in consulting the documents.

schools for boys in the town and to two for girls, neither of these can be identified with the one kept by the Dames de Saint-Louis. It is nevertheless clear that others besides these two existed, but the mayor regularly passes them over - as, for example, in 1810 when he gives the Sous-Préfet a list of the educational establishments in the town, and adds: "Je n'ai pas cru, Monsieur, devoir y comprendre les petites écoles ni les pensionnats dirigés par les femmes."<sup>1)</sup> The census lists of 1791, 1806 and 1816 were then put at my disposal. These were all there are for this period. That of 1791 revealed nothing: it was obviously too early; but in that of 1806 there appears an entry, which undoubtedly refers to the school with which we are concerned. The names are given, it should be explained, by streets. The number of the house is not mentioned, but the members of the household are marked off from their neighbours by a line. Here, then, we find in the list of the inhabitants of the Rue des Buttes:-

Situation.  
Names of  
mistresses  
and girls.

Grémonville	Ferregeot	
Grémonville	Elsonore	
Morin	Marie	
Normandin	Elizabeth	
Pracontal	Euphémie	Glôve
Saint-Aubin	Joséphine	id.
Fleuriot	Caroline	id.
Le Cordier	Caroline	id.
Le Cordier	Adèle	id.
Le Cordier	Antoinette	id.

<sup>1)</sup> Copie de Lettres, 1808-1810. 17 février, 1810.

Basin	Amélie	élève
Croixnard	Zoé	id.
Troque	Louise	id.
Turin	Honorine	id.
De Caen	Constance	id.
De Caen	Adèle	id.
Marin	Marie	id.
Morin	Clémentine	id.
Quiterey	Clémentine	id.
Justin	Louise	id.
Destin	Geneviève	(domestique)
Le Normand	Marie Anne	id.

By the time the census of 1816 was taken the school had disappeared and the only familiar name that reappears in the Rue des Buttes is that of Elizabeth Normandin, who is there described as a "repasseuse."<sup>1)</sup>

Meagre as the entry of 1806 is, it has an undoubted interest, especially as it includes the name of Caroline Fleuriot. The situation of the school is thus fixed, and it should be observed that it is in the upper part of the town and the parish of Saint-Léonard, thus bearing out what Sorel and Flaubert say, though it cannot be called a "ruelle escarpée". The names of the mistresses are known and the names and numbers of the pupils. Among the latter, that of Zoé Croixnard claims our attention, for it must not be forgotten that Caroline Fleuriot's

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<sup>1)</sup> Recensement, 1816. N° 6935. Too much importance should not be attached to this as there had been a family of Normandins in the Rue des Buttes for many generations.

mother was Charlotte Cambremer de Croixmare<sup>1)</sup> and thus Zoé may have been a relation. The demoiselles de Grémonville, whose names head the list and who presumably were the ex-mistresses of Saint-Cyr, may have been connected with an important family of the same name, well known in the neighbourhood, but so far I have not been able to find out anything more about them.<sup>2)</sup> Their names, in this form at least, are not to be found in the "Table des actes de décès" between 1803 and 1822, by which date they had left the Rue des Buttes.

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(v)  
Orléans.

"Succursales"  
mentioned  
by Lavallée.

The only school in the Saint-Cyr tradition about which more is said, in the histories of Saint-Cyr, than a mere statement of its existence, is one at Orléans. In his book, "Madame de Maintenon et la Maison Royale de Saint Cyr",<sup>3)</sup> Lavallée tells how one of the ladies of Saint-Louis, Madame d'Essarts, started a

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1) Flaubert. Corresp. I, p. xi.

2) cp. Fleury-Vindry. Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr: "Eléonore-Françoise Marie de Grimouville-Larchant, baptisée 25 novembre 1755 à (Saint-Thomas) Saint-Lo (Manche) diocèse de Coutances, fille de Charles-François de Grimonville et d'Elisabeth-Pétronille van Eberbrock, novice (21 sep. 1776) religieuse (21 sep. 1778) à Saint-Cyr. Sortie en 1793." In the list of "Saint-Cyriennes probables" appears the name of Félicité-Françoise-Pétronille de Grimouville, daughter of the above. Baptised 31 May, 1759. Entered Saint-Cyr 1768.

3) Ch. 16. It is also referred to by Fleury-Vindry in his paper in "Au Déclin de L'Ancien Régime."

boarding school at Orléans in 1795. He gives the names of six of her companions and states that the old aristocracy were more than willing to entrust their daughters to her and that the school was very successful for some time. He then goes on to say that another of the ex-nuns, Madame d'Elpeyrou, was received into the family of a certain Madame de Nonant as governess to her daughter, and that she founded the "Institut de la Sainte-Enfance" on the model of Saint-Cyr.

The present day Institut de la Sainte-Enfance is a modern foundation.

As there exists to this day an "Institut de la Sainte-Enfance" at Orléans, it seemed easier to investigate than the other, but the results were disappointing. It appears that this "Institut" only dates from the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was founded as an orphanage for the victims of an outbreak of cholera. The "Almanach du département du Loiret" has the following entry under the heading of "Associations charitables" in 1847: "Maison de la Sainte-Enfance, Rue de l'Epée d'Ecosse. On enseigne dans cette maison la lecture, l'écriture, les calculs, le repassage et les travaux d'aiguille. On y confectionne les ornements d'église."1)

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1) Sources: Almanach du département du Loiret - all numbers available from 1794-1850.

L'Orléanais, 1831...

Le Journal du Loiret, 1801-1811.

I am also indebted to Madame la Directrice, Institut de la Sainte-Enfance, Orléans, for information about the origin of the Institut and to Mesdemoiselles Turbau, 20<sup>is</sup> rue aux Loups, for details about the Pension Vaultier.

There is no sign whatever of this being the "Institut" founded by Madame d'Elpeyrou, and I am inclined to think that hers was not at Orléans at all.

A school mentioned in the "Almanach" can be identified with that founded by Mme d'Essarts.

The "Almanach" already referred to has, however, some light to throw upon the foundation of Madame d'Essarts. The numbers of this publication for the years 1795-1799 are unfortunately missing from the municipal library and those of 1800 and 1801 make no mention of such a school; But in the year XI (i.e. 1802-3) the list given of private schools for girls is headed by "Mesdemoiselles de Saint-Cyr, rue Bannier". The entry is not to be found again until 1808, but thereafter the names of "Mesdames de Saint-Cyr, faubourg Bannier" appear regularly until 1830. In 1831 it has become the "Institution Royale de Saint-Cyr dirigée par Madame Martin, faubourg Bannier", but what happened to it thereafter will perhaps never be known, for there seems to be no trace of it at Orléans.

Other schools of the time issued prospectuses or notices in the local papers, from which can at least be learnt the name of the mistress, and the subjects she professed to teach,<sup>1)</sup> but

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<sup>1)</sup>cp. Journal du Loiret, vendredi dix-sept nivose, an XI. Avis. L'établissement formé depuis près de cinquante ans par Mademoiselle Thérèse Kabi pour l'éducation des jeunes personnes, n'éprouvera aucun changement par le décès de ladite demoiselle. La maison sera toujours tenue par deux personnes de mœurs irréprochables et de talents connus. Sans négliger les arts d'agrément, tels que la musique, le dessin et la danse, elles se

"Mesdames de Saint-Cyr" were either too well known to require such advertisement, or the notices about them have been lost, for there were none to be seen. We therefore know nothing about the school beyond the fact of its existence, its site and the names of the mistresses. These are given by Lavallée as "Mesdames de Luchet, de Machault, de Wollant, de Bar, de la Tremblaye, de Brebeuf, etc." A comparison of this list with the information given in "Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr"<sup>1)</sup> is enough to show that, in spite of the meagre evidence, we are not wrong in thinking that Madame d'Essart's school was that in the Faubourg Bannier. For at the end of the few lines devoted to "Geneviève Camille Suzanne de Brébeuf" the author states: "Elle mourut à Orléans, 1 faubourg Bannier (aujourd'hui Hotel Saint-Aignan) le 6 septembre 1808 (Etat civil d'Orléans, année 1808, n° 1177)." The name,

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proposent 1° de préparer les jeunes personnes à la première communion 2° de leur donner leçon et exemple de tous les travaux qui conviennent aux mères de famille, depuis la couture en linge jusqu'à la broderie, 3° d'enseigner les premiers principes d'orthographe, d'écriture et de calcul, qui seront perfectionnés par les soins du citoyen Dinomé. Pour les enfants en bas âge, il y aura régulièrement tous les jours, deux classes de lecture. Les pères et mères qui voudront bien les honorer de leur confiance, sont priés de s'adresser dans ladite maison, rue Bannier, no. 98.

<sup>1)</sup>Fleury-Vindry, 1908.

the date and the address all correspond and the identity of the two schools is established beyond a doubt.

Local tradition says that the Pension Vaultier was connected with S. Cyr.

Curiously enough, though the school in the Faubourg Bannier is entirely forgotten, there is a tradition at Orléans that there did indeed exist there a "little Saint-Cyr". This was the Pension Vaultier, situated in the Cloître Saint-Aignan, at the other end of the town from the Faubourg Bannier, so that it is not possible that the two have been confused. I had the good fortune to meet two sisters who had been connected with the Pension as pupils and then as mistresses from 1867 till 1893, and it is to them that I am indebted for what follows. According to them, tradition said that the school owed its foundation to one or two "Dames de Saint-Cyr", but the first head-mistress of whom they knew was Madame du Crozet, who died at an advanced age in 1843. She was succeeded in turn by Mademoiselle Gradeau, Mademoiselle Soliers (c. 1836-1843) and Mademoiselle Vaultier (1843-1879). After that, under Mademoiselle Gigon, the character of the school changed. Day-girls were admitted and things were not as in the past and it came to an end finally in 1893. These details are of small importance in themselves, but they serve to establish the reliability of the source from which they came for they could be checked by the "Almanach"



and shown to be accurate.<sup>1)</sup>

Description  
of the  
pension.

The Pension Vaultier, therefore, was a boarding school for about forty girls, all from the best families of Orléans. They were divided into four or five classes, distinguished by different coloured ribbons, grey, brown and so on. Each class had its own mistress, who gave the French lessons and was also responsible for the discipline, but the other lessons - science, history, literature, drawing, writing - were given by masters from the boys' lycée. For many years at least, religious instruction was given by the Curé of Saint-Aignan, and the girls were taken regularly - though not daily in later years except during Lent - to the parish church. Physical education was not excluded, for great care was taken of the health of the girls and they were taken for walks and the younger ones even did some form of gymnastics. Their instruction also included a great deal of sewing and embroidery and the "arts d'agrément" were taught too, but as extras.

The day began at 6.30 in summer and 7 in winter and there were lessons from 9-12 and then lunch and recreation. Sewing

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<sup>1)</sup>The name of the pension appears in the "Almanach du Loiret" after 1810. The names of the "directrices" as given there are as follows:-

- 1810-1829 Mesdemoiselles de Crozey (or, sometimes de Croizy).
- 1830-1835 Madame Gradeau.
- 1836-1844 Mademoiselle Solliers.
- 1845- Mademoiselle Vaultier.

followed for half an hour and then another lesson before the afternoon interval at 3. There were lessons again from 3.30 till 6, then dinner, work from 7 till 8.30, prayers and bed. This was a fairly heavy day, but at least there were holidays - ten days at the New Year and at Easter and two months in summer - to look forward to, and the girls seem to have been very happy.

Beyond the exclusive character of the school and the uniform and class-colours worn by the girls, there is no point on which we can definitely state that the Pension Vaultier copied Saint-Cyr. There is no trace of such typically Saint-Cyrienne institutions and principles, as the "Noires" or the "Bandes" or the insistence on separation from the family. In fact it may be thought that the evidence - which is only oral tradition, though well corroborated<sup>1)</sup> - is insufficient to justify any mention of the Pension here at all. Nevertheless, although its inclusion in the Saint-Cyr tradition can only be suggested very tentatively, the school yet deserves attention as an example of one that claimed to have some connection with Madame de Maintenon's foundation and was proud of its claim.

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<sup>1)</sup>Further testimony to the tradition of the connection was furnished by the directrice of the Pension Méschin, rue du Bourdon, Blanc. It was suggested to me that that might be the school I was looking for, but when I went to make enquiries the directrice told me without any hesitation that it was not the Pension Méschin but the Pension Vaultier, cloître Saint-Aignan, which was connected with S. Cyr.

(vi)  
Other schools.

There is no doubt that there were many more schools descended from Saint-Cyr than those which we have just been considering. Little more is known about them, however, than their name, but it is to be hoped that more will be discovered in time.

Appeals from  
 Artois,  
 Languedoc,  
 Burgundy,  
 came to  
 nothing.

It is clear that even during the lifetime of Madame de Maintenon there was a demand from other parts of the country for Saint-Cyrs of their own. Artois, Languedoc and Burgundy were all eager to have copies of it in their midst and made an appeal to the king, even offering to pay part of the expenses themselves. The project came to nothing, however, because of the misfortunes of the end of the reign of Louis XIV.<sup>1)</sup>

Lille.  
 Montpellier.  
 Le Gers.  
 Langon.

Other "succursales" are mentioned in Fleury Vindry's article on "Saint-Cyr au temps de Louis XV",<sup>2)</sup> where, in addition to Languet de Gergy's Institut and the schools at Arles and Orléans, he speaks of one at Lille, "Le Pensionnat de la Sainte et Noble Famille"; one at Montpellier, founded by Mademoiselle de Fages-Vaumale; one in the Gers, founded by Mademoiselle de Médrano and another at Langon. Of the last mentioned, the brother of the author writes: "Mademoiselle Marie-Jeanne, dite Coraly de Baritault, ancienne élève de Saint-Cyr, sortie en

<sup>1)</sup> Lavallée, ch. II, p. 239.

<sup>2)</sup> Publ. in "Au Déclin de l'Ancien Régime", edit. by Compagny des Bordes de Villiers de l'Isle Adam, 1924.

1793, dirigeait en 1839 à Langon (Gironde) une maison d'éducation, Saint-Cyr, où elle vivait encore en 1842 - (elle mourut à Paris en 1844). Je ne sais pas ce qu'est devenue cette maison."<sup>1)</sup> The information is quite definite so far as it goes and it should not be impossible to find out more about the school at Langon.

Montauban.

near Toulouse.

The Soeurs de l'Instruction Charitable, or Dames de Saint-Maur, a few of whom looked after Mademoiselle de Grille's foundation at Arles, established many schools all over France, of which two in particular may have owed something to Saint-Cyr.<sup>2)</sup> At Le Moustier, Montauban, were educated two hundred girls belonging to the aristocracy. The school was founded at the end of the eighteenth century and started again after the Revolution in 1816, under the title of "Maison Royale d'Instruction Chrétienne pour les jeunes demoiselles, et d'école pour les pauvres filles". The school started at Lévignac, near Toulouse, in 1776, for one hundred "jeunes filles de la noblesse" shows more distinct signs of the influence of Saint-Cyr. It was called a "Petit Saint-Cyr" and certain Memoirs say of it that "On y remarquait la même tenue, la même distinction que dans le Saint-Cyr royal." It was forced to remove twice, first to the

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1) Letter of Monsieur Jean Vindry, April, 1926.

2) cp. L'Institut des Soeurs de l'Instruction Charitables. Esquisse historique par une Religieuse du Meme Institut. Paris, 1920.

hotel de Lavedan and then to an ancient monastery of Feuillants, and a drawing of the last dating from 1818 was dedicated to the superior by the "demoiselles de la classe bleue",<sup>1)</sup> which suggests that the Saint-Cyr nomenclature was copied there too.

7.  
Les Maisons  
d'Education de  
la Légion  
d'Honneur.

One large group of schools has not been mentioned yet, though, in order of importance, it should come first. For all the others were small and have perished; but the Houses of Education of the Legion of Honour are among the best-known schools in France even at the present day. No one who reads about them can fail to be struck by the many points of resemblance between them and Saint-Cyr. Louis XIV had said, in the "Lettres de Fondation": "Nous avons résolu de fonder et établir une maison et communauté où un nombre considérable de jeunes filles, issues de familles nobles et particulièrement de pères morts dans le service ou qui y seroient actuellement, soient entretenues gratuitement et eslevées dans les principes d'une véritable et solide piété, et recoivent toutes les instructions qui peuvent convenir à leur naissance et à leur sexe."<sup>2)</sup> In the same way, Napoleon

Likeness to  
St Cyr in  
circumstances  
of their  
Foundation.

<sup>1)</sup> Reproduced in "Les Maîtresses Charitables du Saint Enfant Jésus", publié pour l'Exposition Vaticane des Missions, 1924, Braun et Cie., Dornach.

<sup>2)</sup> Lettres de fondation de la maison de St Louis à St Cyr. Arch. dép. de Seine et Oise. Fonds St Cyr. Carton 1.

founded Ecouen as a school where the daughters of his new nobility, the Legion of Honour, could be educated free of charge "Élevées dans des sentiments d'une piété solide",<sup>1)</sup> and so trained as to be able, in their turn, to bring up their own children worthily. The aim and the character of the two foundations were the same and, as we look into them, we shall see that they had much in common in their regulations and methods as well. We must now examine the connection between them and estimate how far the "Maisons d'Education de la Légion d'Honneur" are indebted to the "Maison Royale de Saint Louis à Saint Cyr".

#### Foundation of Ecouen.

Of the three Legion of Honour schools existing to-day, Saint-Denis, Ecouen and Les Loges, Ecouen was the first to be established. The story goes that the idea of its foundation leapt to the mind of Napoleon on the eve of Austerlitz. There is no doubt that, on the day after the battle, he issued a decree by which he adopted all the children of the fallen, boys and girls alike.<sup>2)</sup> Much of the credit, however, for the final form which the institution took must be given to Madame Campan. She had known Napoleon when she was at the head of a school of her own at Saint-Germain and she had tried to inspire him with the idea of founding a kind of Saint-Cyr of which she

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<sup>1)</sup> Lettre de Napoléon à Finkenstein à M. de Lacépède, 15 mai, 1807. Arch. Nat. Corres. de Napoléon I LXV (quoted Bonneville de Marsangy, "M<sup>lle</sup> Campan à Ecouen", 1879, ch. V).

<sup>2)</sup> 16 frimaire, an XIV. Bulletin des Lois, an XIV. 4<sup>e</sup> série. T. IV, p. 156.

should be the Madame de Maintenon. Her plan was carefully considered by the Conseil d'Etat, who adopted it in the following terms just four days before Napoleon issued his decree: "Article premier. Il sera établi des maisons d'éducation pour les filles des membres de la Légion d'Honneur; le nombre de ces maisons ne pourra excéder celui de trois."<sup>1)</sup> The deliberations of the Council were communicated to Napoleon in due course. They did not entirely fit in with his designs. He had meant to found two schools, one for boys, one for girls, for the children of all who had been killed at Austerlitz, while the Council spoke of three, for the daughters of members of the Legion of Honour only. Nevertheless, he finally approved the recommendations of the Council and signed the decree.<sup>2)</sup>

Madame Campan  
the first  
"surinten-  
dante".

The letters of Madame Campan at this time show how delighted she was at the new project. She not only felt that she was in some measure responsible for it, but she fully expected to be put at the head of the new school.

Her life.

Madame Campan was then a woman of over fifty. She was born in 1752, of ordinary, middle-class parents, who had given her an exceptionally good education, and she soon obtained a position as "reader" to the daughters of Louis XV. "J'étais fort jeune", she writes, "lorsque je fus placée auprès des

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<sup>1)</sup>9 frimaire, an XIV. Arch. Nat. Extraits des registres des délibérations du Conseil d'Etat.

<sup>2)</sup>For all the history of the foundation of Ecouen cp. Bonneville de Marsangy. "Madame Campan à Ecouen," ch. 122.

princesses, filles de Louis XV, en qualité de lectrice. J'ai vu la cour de Versailles avant l'époque du mariage de Louis XVI avec l'archiduchesse, Marie-Antoinette."<sup>1)</sup> The early chapters of her "Mémoires" are full of reminiscences of this time. She was then made lady-in-waiting to Marie-Antoinette, whom she served devotedly until the latter's imprisonment. She even begged to be allowed to share her captivity. This was refused her, and, after the death of the queen, Madame Campan found herself in the midst of difficulties. She had married in 1774 a man whom she describes later as "volage, dissipateur et entièrement opposé au lien conjugal".<sup>2)</sup> He was now an invalid, and in addition she had her mother and her son, a boy of nine, to look after. Moreover, practically all her money was gone,<sup>3)</sup> and she was under suspicion because of her attachment to the royal family.

Founds a  
school at  
St. Germain.

In these straits, Madame Campan resolved to set up a school. "Après le dix-huit fructidor", she said, "je ne trouvai d'autre moyen de vivre que d'utiliser mon talent. Je montai une maison d'éducation à Saint-Germain. Cet établissement réussit au-delà de mon espérance. Je le mis

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1) Campan. "Mémoires sur la Vie Privée de Marie-Antoinette". Avant-propos de l'auteur.

2) Buchon. Corres. inédite de M<sup>me</sup> Campan, 11 septembre, 1800.

3) Maigne. Journal Anecdotique de M<sup>me</sup> Campan. Lettres à son fils, 1<sup>er</sup> thermidor an IX. "N'oublie jamais .. l'assignat de 400 francs qui me restait pour seule et unique propriété au monde lorsque j'arrivai à St Germain".



sur un grand pied; les meilleurs maitres de Paris vinrent chez moi; et je puis affirmer que c'est l'époque de ma vie où j'ai été le plus heureuse."<sup>1)</sup> The success of the school was immediate and the numbers of the pupils increased steadily.<sup>2)</sup> Madame de Beauharnais brought her daughter, Hortense, and her two nieces, and entrusted them all to Madame Campan's care. Hortense, the future queen of Holland, became later the confidante of all Madame Campan's schemes, the friend to whom so many letters are addressed. Two sisters of Napoleon were sent there also, and it was at Saint-Germain that the First Consul became acquainted with Madame Campan. To fill in the long winter evenings, she had made her girls rehearse "Esther" - "ce chef d'œuvre de Racine, composé pour la maison royale de Saint-Cyr",<sup>3)</sup> as she calls it - and performances were given of it three winters in succession. To one of these Napoleon came, with his captains and his ministers and the chief men of the state, and Madame Campan felt that one of the glories of Saint-Cyr had been revived. For the idea of making another Royal House was never far from her mind, and, though her means did not allow her to imitate it very far at Saint-Germain, she had always hoped that the Emperor would found a school like that founded by Louis XIV, and set her over it.

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1) Maigne. Journal anecdotique.

2) Idem. "Pensées sur l'éducation", pt. II, § 3.

3) Idem.

Her appointment  
to Ecouen.

When Napoleon signed the decree creating a school for the daughters of members of the Legion of Honour, Madame Campan felt that she had achieved her end. Her letters show her certainty that the government of it would be entrusted to her. Indeed, even to someone reading her letters at this date, her confidence is irritating, but it was not unwarrantable; Napoleon had said to her: "C'est à élever des mères que je vous destine",<sup>1)</sup> and, from conversations with him at the Malmaison, she felt that the position was all but promised to her.<sup>2)</sup> The delay, therefore, before she was actually appointed was very trying, and her relief when she was at last nominated "surintendante de la Maison impériale Napoléon"<sup>3)</sup> can be readily imagined.

Her character.

On the whole, it was a wise appointment. Madame Campan was well qualified, both by nature and experience, for the post. She was a born teacher.<sup>4)</sup> She was well-read, her writings show that she had thought much about education and was interested in her pupils. She possessed natural dignity and charm, which was enhanced by a beautiful voice and a good carriage. Having lived so long at court, she could

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1) Barrière. Notice sur la vie de M<sup>me</sup> Campan, 1823.

2) Maigné. Journal Anecdote. Lettres à son fils, 26 août, 1807. "L'E— a dit qu'il me nommerait: il n'a nommé personne."

3) Bonneville de Marsangy. Op. cit. ch. 5. Decree of Sept. 5th, 1807.

4) cp. Barrière. Op. cit. "A douze ans, M<sup>lle</sup> Genet ne rencontrait point à la promenade ou dans les rues de pensions de petites filles, qu'elle n'ambitionnât le rang, le titre et l'autorité de leur maîtresse."

fulfil all her social duties easily and gracefully, and her pupils would learn from her that "science du monde"<sup>1)</sup> in which she herself excelled. Moreover, she was able to organize and to command - two essential qualities for one who was going to start a new institution from the very beginning, and who had under her orders not only two or three hundred girls, but an increasing number of mistresses as well. Unhappily, her ability to command was apt to become a harsh, repressive authoritative-ness, from which her subordinates were anxious to escape. We could wish, too, that she had been less of a snob and less anxious to put herself forward. Yet, whatever we may think of this side of her nature, too much in evidence at Ecouen, we cannot help admiring her many good qualities, nor withhold our respect from her, especially during the last years of her life.

The school at  
Ecouen.

In 1807, Madame Campan was appointed headmistress of the new school. The castle of Ecouen was chosen as its site. In October of that year, though the alterations were not yet complete, Madame Campan received permission to live in the castle, in order to superintend the work, and to get things ready for the pupils as soon as possible. This is how she described her first impressions of Ecouen: "Le château est bien réparé: on voit qu'il n'a pas été construit pour la

a) description  
of the  
buildings.

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1) Journal Anec. ou Corr. Inéd. cp. Marsangy ch. I.

chose, mais les dortoirs sont beaux, les réfectoires superbes, le lieu salubre et entouré du plus beau pays des environs de Paris".<sup>1)</sup> The work of adapting the buildings went on rapidly. By the middle of November the school was opened, and the mistresses and girls began to arrive.

b) mistresses.

At the beginning, the staff was small and consisted of "quatre surveillantes, quatre institutrices, deux maîtresses de travaux à l'aiguille, une infirmière, une dépositaire, une sous-économe",<sup>2)</sup> but the numbers were increased as the school grew. There were different grades among them from the start, and four of the senior ones were chosen to form a "Conseil" which met every week and discussed matters of internal management with the headmistress. Except at the very beginning, the mistresses were recruited as far as possible from the girls: they were shut off from the world almost as strictly as though they were in a convent, and they wore a uniform. In 1881, this consisted of a black stuff dress and cloak to match, black hat and gloves and a white collar.<sup>3)</sup> Even at the present day, though the uniform has been abolished, all have to dress in black. From the outside, at least, the criticism sometimes brought against the Legion of Honour Schools, that the mistresses there are

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1) Corres. Inédite. Lettre à Hortense.

2) Arch. Nat. A.F. IV 279.

3) Brasier. Histoire des Maisons d'Education de la Légion d'Honneur. Ch. 3.

"lay nuns", seems to have some foundation.<sup>1)</sup>

c) pupils

The mistresses arrived at Ecouen on November 17th, and the first pupils came two days later. The school was originally intended for one hundred girls. Most of these were to be

i) conditions of admittance.

educated free of charge, though there were a few who paid fees. They were supposed to be admitted between the ages of seven and ten and to stay till they were eighteen, but this rule was not followed strictly, for we hear of girls coming when they were quite old so as to be able to say they had been at the school<sup>2)</sup>, though they only stayed for a year or two.

ii) classes.

The numbers increased rapidly and, in 1808, there were three hundred girls. They were divided into six classes, each of which was sub-divided again, making forms of twenty or thirty at the maximum. Each division had two mistresses to "supervise" it, apart from the teachers who actually gave

iii) uniform.

the lessons. The girls all wore a uniform. In accordance with Napoleon's wishes that this should be "l'habillement actuel des femmes"<sup>3)</sup> it consisted of a white dress of the fashion of the day with a belt of a different colour for each class. In 1811, a black uniform took the place of the white, and to this day the girls can be seen in their long

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<sup>1)</sup>Brasier. Histoire des Maisons d'Education de la Légion d'Honneur. Ch. 10.

<sup>2)</sup>Bonneville de Marsangy. Op. cit. ch. 11.

<sup>3)</sup>Lettre à M. de Lacépède. Cp. supra.

pleated serge skirts, tight-fitting bodices, white collars, short cloaks and the bright ribbons which distinguish one class from another.

d) curriculum.

i) religious education.

Napoleon made quite clear what the basis of all the education at Ecouen was to be. "Il faut commencer par la religion dans toute sa sévérité", he wrote: "Presque toute la science qui y sera enseignée doit être celle de l'Evangile. Elevez-nous des croyantes, et non pas des raisonneuses."<sup>1)</sup>

Madame Campan was quite ready to fall in with these ideas. Even at Saint-Germain<sup>2)</sup> she had emphasised the importance of religious training and at Ecouen there was a chapel with daily services and chaplains entrusted with all the religious instruction of the girls. She was not so ready, however,

ii) secular instruction.

to follow Napoleon's ideas on secular instruction. He had written: "Il faut ensuite apprendre aux élèves à chiffrer, à écrire, et les principes de leur langue, afin qu'elles sachent l'orthographe. Il faut leur apprendre un peu de géographie et d'histoire, mais bien se garder de leur montrer ni le latin ni aucune langue étrangère."<sup>3)</sup> Madame Campan did not approve of this rigorous exclusion of languages, and in

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettre à M. de Lacépède. Cp. supra.

<sup>2)</sup>At St. Germain her colleague was a nun to whom she handed over all the religious instruction of the girls. Cp.

<sup>3)</sup>Napoleon. Lettre à M. de Lacépède.

time the curriculum was modified to include, besides the subjects mentioned above, English and Italian.

iii) domestic training.

The greater part of the girls' time, however, was to be taken up with training in household affairs. The ambition both of Napoleon and of Madame Campan for Ecouen could be summed up in the words: "Former des mères". The girls were to be taught everything useful in the home, not only making and mending clothes, cooking and housekeeping, but also how to look after a family and take care of the sick. This is what Napoleon has to say on this subject in the letter quoted already: "Je voudrais qu'une jeune fille, sortant d'Ecouen pour se trouver à la tête d'un petit ménage, sût travailler ses robes, raccommoder les vêtements de son mari, faire la layette de ses enfants, procurer des douceurs à sa petite famille au moyen de la partie d'office d'un ménage de province et soigner son mari et ses enfants lorsqu'ils sont malades." The curriculum at Ecouen therefore allowed much time for domestic subjects.

iv) accomplishments.

Music, drawing, dancing and the other accomplishments found their place in the school too. Napoleon's programme only speaks of dancing and singing, but Madame Campan enlarged upon this and instrumental music was taught as well. She added "deportment lessons" to dancing, and they are described

as "un exercice militaire commandé à cinquante filles à la fois. Elle (i.e. la maîtresse) crie comme un sergent-major, et cela dure quatre heures de suite".<sup>1)</sup> Madame Campan attached great importance to this side of the education of her pupils and, though the Emperor rated it much lower, he seemed to approve and enjoy the songs and dances with which he was greeted when he visited the school.<sup>2)</sup>

#### Time-table.

Though the curriculum at Ecouen was a wide one, the girls were not overworked, and their time was sensibly planned. They rose at six in summer, seven in winter and had an hour for dressing and making their beds. They were then marshalled to their classrooms for prayers and then to chapel for Mass. After breakfast, some time was allowed for play, and lessons began at ten and went on till three, with a break at twelve, when the girls had a piece of bread to eat. At three came dinner and recreation. Lessons followed again from five till eight, and, after supper and prayers, all went to bed at nine.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) Arch. de la Légion d'Honneur. Doc. inédit. Lettre à M. de Lacépède, 5 mai, 1809. (Quoted Bonneville de Marsangy, op. cit. ch. VI.)

2) Campan. Lettres de deux Amies. 43<sup>me</sup> Lettre.

3) M<sup>me</sup> Durand. Mémoires sur Napoléon. Détails sur l'Organisation de la Maison d'Ecouen. Cp. also: Campan, Lettres de deux Amies.



Care of health. Great care was taken of the girls' health. They were taught neatness and cleanliness, which would help to keep them well, and their food, though of the simplest, was good and well prepared. "La nourriture ne saurait être trop simple:" - so ran the Emperor's directions - "de la soupe, du bouilli et une petite entrée: il ne faut rien de plus."<sup>1)</sup> Thus, every precaution was taken to keep the girls in health, and, when they were ill, they were looked after in the school sick-room by the doctor attached to the school. Madame Campan had to send reports on the invalids to the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honour: one of these will show what attention was paid even to a trifling ailment. "Ce 2 décembre 1807. Monseigneur, Monsieur Lagarde est venu deux fois voir Mademoiselle Virginie de Saint-Pierre. Il n'y a pas le moindre symptôme inquiétant. Sa légère indisposition venait, je crois, de l'effet d'un déjeuner au lait, ce qui ne lui convient pas (la jeune personne étant bileuse). J'aurai soin qu'elle ne s'expose plus à semblable indisposition."<sup>2)</sup> Care such as this seems ridiculous, but it was the more necessary as the school assumed full responsibility for the girls, and took them right out of their parents' hands.<sup>3)</sup> The separation.

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<sup>1)</sup>Lettre à M. de Lacépède. Cp. supra.

<sup>2)</sup>Arch. de la Légion d'Honneur. Document inédit.  
(Quoted Bonneville de Marsangy, ch. V.)

<sup>3)</sup>Napoleon. Lettre à M. de Lacépède, "Si l'on ne peut se dispenser de laisser entrer les parents en cas de maladies graves, ils ne doivent être admis qu'avec une permission du Grand Chancelier de la Légion d'Honneur".

Separation  
from Family.

from the family was almost as complete at Ecouen as at Saint-Cyr. In the early days there were no holidays at all: visitors were not encouraged, and, though the girls might see their parents on certain days, they might not be alone with them, but had to be content with talking to them in the parlour in the presence of a mistress. It is little wonder that we hear of two sisters running away in order to see their mother who was staying close by.<sup>1)</sup> It was a wise policy that relaxed this rule, so that the pupils of the Legion of Honour schools now enjoy the same holidays as other children in France.

Official  
visits.

At Saint-Cyr, the monotony of an unending school year was broken by official visits. The Emperor came three times in all. The first visit, to which we have already referred, took place in 1809. Napoleon arrived unexpectedly at mid-day, and went through the classes questioning some of the pupils and inspecting their work. One account tells how "Napoléon examina les bas que les petites tricotaient; il les ouvrit, y passa la main et les inspecta comme aurait pu le faire une bonne ménagère."<sup>2)</sup> He then attended a service in chapel, and afterwards saw all the girls drawn up on the terrace on

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1) Bonneville de Marsangy. Op. cit. ch. 11.

2) Campan: Lettres de deux Amies.

one side of the house. They sang and danced to him, and the day ended with his granting pensions to four who were specially recommended to him. He also asked for a treat for the whole school, and expressed, to Madame Campan, his satisfaction with everything he had seen. He came again in 1611, bringing with him Marie-Louise, and, for a third time, during the Hundred Days. Since then Saint-Denis and Ecouen have always been honoured by the visits of kings or the chief men of the state.

#### Supervision.

The discipline at Ecouen under Madame Campan somewhat recalls that of Saint-Cyr. There was the same constant supervision: the girls were no more left to themselves in the dormitories and parlours and during recreation than during lessons in their classrooms. Again Madame de Maintenon had urged her nuns to be ingenious in inventing little devices which would serve as a stimulus to the girls<sup>1)</sup> and it was an art in which Madame Campan excelled. Some of these, as she herself admits, failed because they caused too much excitement. For example, we read of girls fainting when they did not win a certain "good conduct prize" depending on votes.<sup>2)</sup> Unsuccessful experiments were not repeated, but

#### Emulation.

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1) Lettres .. sur l'éduc<sup>n</sup> I, p. 2. Notes pour les maitresses de Noisy, 1685.

2) Maigne: Journal Anecdotique. Pensées sur l'Education pt. II, §3.

other prizes and penalties were devised to take their place, for Madame Campan was inclined to over-estimate their importance in education.

Foundation of  
St. Denis.

After this brief account of the foundation of Ecouen, and the education given there, we must glance rapidly at the origins of the other Legion of Honour Schools. No sooner had Ecouen been started than arrangements were made for founding a second school, of the same type, at Saint-Denis. Statutes for it were drawn up in 1809.<sup>1)</sup> Madame Campan was full of anxiety lest the new establishment should eclipse the old. In order not to have her rival at her very gates she proposed the Val-de-Grâce as being a more suitable building than Saint-Denis. This proposal came to nothing. She then suggested, naively, that it would be a good plan to have one person in charge of both schools, so that they might work in harmony, and that that person should be herself. She received no support, however, not even from her ex-pupil and patroness, Hortense, and Madame Dupouzet, second in command at Ecouen, was appointed "surintendante" of the new school.<sup>2)</sup> A large contingent, both of mistresses and girls, went from the old to the new establishment, and Saint-Denis was formally opened in 1811.

1) Arch. Nat. A.F. IV 60, quoted by Bonneville de Marsangy. Op. cit. ch. 8.

2) Cp. comment in handwriting of an ex-pupil of Ecouen in the margin of "Journal Anecdote" - "Madame Campan faillit devenir folle de désespoir lorsque S.M. l'empereur fit M<sup>me</sup> du Bouzet surintendante de S. Denis." Idem ch. 9.

The "Maisons des Orphelines" - sprung from a school started by Mme de Lezeau.

The third Legion of Honour school which exists to-day, Les Loges, had its origin in an orphanage founded by Madame de Lézeau.<sup>1)</sup> The history of this institution cannot be understood apart from that of the Congrégation de la Mère de Dieu, which was founded as early as 1641. In that year Monsieur Hier, curé de Saint-Sulpice, founded an orphanage in the rue du Vieux Colombier, which lasted until the Revolution under the name of the "Orphelines de la Mère de Dieu". It had not been long closed before there came into touch with the ex-nuns a certain Madame de Lézeau. She was herself a nun, but her convent had been closed like so many others. After the Concordat she determined to open a school like the "Orphelines de la Mère de Dieu". She was helped in her scheme by the nuns of the ancient foundation, and received support and protection from various important people, including the Empress and the Princess Hortense. Her pupils were nearly all children of men who had been killed in battle and there was a great similarity between her foundation and the school at Ecouen. She therefore wrote to Napoleon and told him about the school, and asked for his help. A few months later, she learned that she had been chosen to direct six orphan schools which the Emperor was going to found.<sup>2)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup>For the history of Les Loges cp. Ed. Petit "Les Maisons d'Orphelines de la Légion d'Honneur, et les Succursales de la Maison d'Education de St Denis", 1890.

<sup>2)</sup>Idem.

This was in 1808. The actual decree calling the new schools into existence dates only from July, 1810, and begins thus: "Il est créé six maisons ou couvents destinés à recueillir et à élever les orphelines, dont les pères sont morts officiers ou chevaliers de la Légion d'Honneur, ou à notre service, dans quelque grade que ce soit pour la défense de l'Etat, ou dont les mères étant mortes, les pères sont appelés pour notre service hors de l'empire."<sup>1)</sup> The original plan was to found six schools, but only three were ever opened - Paris, Barbeaux and Les Loges. Places were given in them to the pupils of Madame de Lézeau's school and she was set over them all. The Emperor approved and visited the orphan schools just as he did Ecouen and Saint-Denis.

History of  
the schools  
after Water-  
loo.

Thus were founded the schools of the Legion of Honour. On the downfall of Napoleon a decree was issued joining Ecouen to Saint-Denis and closing the others altogether. The second part of this was rescinded, however, and Paris and Les Loges became branches of Saint-Denis,<sup>2)</sup> though Ecouen was sold. Madame Campan's career thus came to an end. Ever since the foundation of Saint-Denis she knew that she was out of favour, but she went on with her work in spite of grave difficulties, and distinguished herself by her courage when Ecouen was in

Retirement  
and death of  
Madame Campan.

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<sup>1)</sup>Bonneville de Marsangy. Op. cit. ch. 9.

<sup>2)</sup>The third house, Barbeaux, was evacuated in 1814 because of the war and closed in 1817.

the middle of the army of the Allies in March, 1814. In 1816 she retired to Mantes, where she lived with an old pupil who had married a Docteur Maigne, the author of the "Journal Anecdorique de Madame Campan". Though at this stage of her life she had no opportunity to use her undoubted gifts of teaching and organisation, yet it is then that she appears in the best light. For it is then that there come to light the more human qualities of grief at the death of her son, affection for her friends and patience with which she bore the incurable disease from which she died in 1822.

There was no outward change in the schools till 1851, when Ecouen came back into the possession of the Legion of Honour and took the place of the Paris school. Thus the three which exist to-day came into being. Thirty years later Ecouen and Les Loges were secularised and the nuns' place was taken by lay women. The social distinctions between the schools gradually disappeared also, and the girls now pass on from one to another according to their age and the kind of training they require. But Saint-Denis, at least, retains something of its ancient character, and the old buildings, huge dormitories and quaint uniforms suggest a system as firmly fixed in the past as the Saint-Cyr, of which the critics complain that, at the end of the eighteenth century, it was still rooted in the reign of Louis XIV.

Debt of the  
Legion of Honour  
schools to St  
Cyr.

They were not  
meant to be  
definitely  
modelled upon  
it.

The way in which the Legion of Honour schools were founded and their organisation are both reminiscent of Saint-Cyr. The question arises how far they are directly indebted to it. Napoleon, though he admired Madame de Maintenon's writings<sup>1)</sup> and knew Saint-Cyr, where his sister had been educated<sup>2)</sup>, says quite definitely that he does not want it imitated at Ecouen: "Il faut que l'établissement d'Ecouen soit beau dans tout ce qui est monument et qu'il soit simple dans tout ce qui est éducation," - thus begins his famous letter<sup>3)</sup> - "Gardez-vous de suivre l'exemple de l'ancien établissement de Saint-Cyr, où l'on dépensait des sommes considérables, et où l'on élevait mal les demoiselles." He was not the man to be content with any mere copy: he saw the faults of Saint-Cyr and he wished the new foundation to start afresh and to avoid the mistakes of the old. Madame Campan also, to whom was entrusted the carrying out of his design, was too ready to learn from all kinds of people to be content with Madame de Maintenon as her sole model. She quotes from other writers on education - Montaigne, Fénelon, Rousseau, Madame de Genlis - and she sometimes refers to the practices of

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1) Letter of Sep. 6th, 1816. "Je crois que je préfère les lettres de Madame de Maintenon à celles de Madame de Sévigné: elles disent plus de choses."

2) Cp. supra. Ch. 3, p. 68.

3) A M. de Lacépède, 15 mai, 1807.



Saint-Cyr in criticism and not in commendation.<sup>1)</sup> Moreover, she emphatically repudiates the charge of having taken Saint-Cyr as her model on one occasion at least, when she writes: "L'établissement formé à Ecouen, et ceux projetés par Sa Majesté, Empereur et Roi, ne sont point des imitations de Saint-Cyr et de L'Enfant-Jésus."<sup>2)</sup>

- but copied part of the "Règlement" and had it continually before their mind.

On the other hand, the very fact that she so vigorously denies the connection suggests that some people had assumed that it existed, and good grounds can be found for such an assumption. In the first place, when the Conseil d'Etat was considering Madame Campan's project in 1805, it examined carefully the constitutions of Saint-Cyr, to see what it could learn from them.<sup>3)</sup> Again, Madame Durand, in her "Mémoires sur Napoléon" writes: "Au début, ces maisons (i.e. Ecouen and Saint-Denis) avaient été formées à l'instar de Saint-Cyr, sans cependant en avoir tout le mérite." But the most striking evidence of all is the fact that the idea of Saint-Cyr and of Madame de Maintenon seems to haunt the mind of Madame Campan. We have already noticed how she revived "Esther" at Saint-Germain. In the same way she encouraged music at Ecouen in her ambition

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1) Maigne. Journal Anecdote. Pensées sur L'Education, pt. II. "De l'éducation publique", § 4.

2) Campan. Correspondance inédite .. à la reine de Hollande.

3) Bonneville de Marsangy. Op. cit. ch. 2.

to out-do the splendour of the chapel services at Saint-Cyr.<sup>1)</sup> But, above all, we find her constantly referring to the foundation of Madame de Maintenon as, for instance, when she writes: "Quand les etrangers viennent et admirent un ensemble qui l'emporte sur celui de Saint-Cyr, et que l'on me demande si S.M. l'Imperatrice viendra bientôt et pourquoi elle n'est pas venue, je souffre et ne sais que repondre." Saint-Cyr is mentioned quite unnecessarily here, and, by this and other casual references, the impression left<sup>2)</sup> is that it was constantly before the mind of Madame Campan, partly as an ideal to be reached, partly as a rival to be outstripped. She would like to have the credit of starting something new, but she cannot get away from the old, and her honesty triumphs over her pride when she writes: "J'ai imité tout ce que l'on peut connaître des lois extérieures de cet établissement."

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### 8. Foreign Education - Russia.

Comments on the resemblance of Ecouen and the Institutes of Catherine of Russia.

The "Journal Anecdotique" of Madame Campan tells how, a few days after the battle of Paris, the emperor of Russia came to visit Ecouen. "Il trouva beaucoup de rapports", the account

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1) Idem. ch. 6 ... "surtout la musique religieuse. Mme Campan souhaitait de ressusciter à cet égard les traditions de Saint-Cyr, en adoptant, pour les cérémonies de sa chapelle, le chant oratorien."

2) Corres. ined. à la reine de Hollande. Lettre du 5 oct. 1809, etc.

continues, "entre l'organisation de la maison d'Ecouen et celle que la reine sa mère a créée à Saint-Petersbourg; ce qui n'était point étonnant puisque pour l'un comme pour l'autre de ces établissements on avait consulté et adopté en partie les règlements de Saint-Cyr." A century later, the same resemblance attracted the attention of a French scholar who was inspecting a certain Russian school and who said of it: "Souvent même on pourrait se croire dans quelque pensionnat d'Ecouen ou de Saint-Denis".<sup>1)</sup> These schools, which were so like those of the Legion of Honour, were the "Institutes for Girls of the Nobility", founded by Catherine the Great.<sup>2)</sup>

Resemblance  
explained -  
they had a  
common origin,  
St. Cyr.

It is no wonder that those who had seen both the Legion of Honour schools and the Russian Institutes were impressed by their resemblance, but the Russian foundation was even more like Saint-Cyr than were Ecouen and Saint-Denis. Catherine the Great, like Madame de Maintenon, intended her schools for girls of noble birth but humble means: she separated her pupils as completely from their families as they had ever been at Saint-Cyr; and though she was not interested in education in the same way as Madame de Maintenon,<sup>3)</sup> she was interested in the

1) Lirondelle. "Chez les Collégiennes russes". Revue Pédagogique. 17 juin 1909.

2) Other schools of the same kind were founded by Maria-Feodorovna, widow of Paul I, and mother of the emperor Alexander, referred to above.

3) But cp. Castéra. Life of ... Catherine II. vol. III. ch. 17. Catherine wrote many school-books and translated foreign pedagogical works.

schools she founded. Thus the Institutes were constantly in touch with the Empress: they were accustomed to royal visits, and the education given there bore the stamp both of court and of convent, just as it did at Saint-Cyr.

Proof that  
St. Cyr  
provided a  
model for the  
Institutes.

These were no chance resemblances and Madame Campan was right in saying that, in founding the Institutes, the Empress had "consulted and adopted" the Saint-Cyr plan. The proof is to be found in her Letters and other papers, and, as she sometimes wrote in French, it is possible, even without a knowledge of Russian, to know that she definitely sought inspiration from Saint-Cyr and that the common tradition of a connection between the two schools is founded on fact.<sup>1)</sup> One quotation will suffice: it is from some notes written by Catherine herself in 1762, for even before she became empress she had thought out her scheme and had evidently been studying Saint-Cyr. She writes: "Etablissement de Saint-Cyr. Le moyen de l'imiter avec utilité et aisance serait de faire venir une maîtresse de classe et d'obtenir l'institution et les journaux de cette maison de la cour de France même, car les dames de Saint-Louis sont obligées de les tenir secrets."<sup>2)</sup> In time, both mistress

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1) cp. Noailles. I. Buisson. Dict. de Pédagogie. art. Russie. (Jean Fleury).

2) Quoted in a Russian history of the Institutes by N.P. Cherepnin. 1914. (Brit. Mus. 8358. h.i.)

and papers were procured and the Institutes founded to which Voltaire refers in his letters as "your Saint-Cyr", contrasting them with "our Saint-Cyr", where there were only two hundred and fifty girls.<sup>1)</sup>

History of  
the Insti-  
tutes.

The Institutes for Girls of the Nobility, whose inclusion in the Saint-Cyr tradition has thus been justified, were founded by Catherine the Great in 1764.<sup>2)</sup> The first was opened in an old convent, the Convent of the Resurrection, on the banks of the Neva, in Saint-Petersburg. The school held about five hundred girls, from sixteen to eighteen years old, who were drawn half from the aristocracy and half from the middle classes. It was successful from the start. Diderot was full of praise for it and, much as he admired the corresponding institution for boys, he wrote: "Votre école de Cadets n'est pas, à beaucoup près, aussi parfaite que l'école de vos jeunes filles."<sup>3)</sup> Paul I founded a second Institute, the "Institute of Sainte-Catherine", and his widow, Maria Feodorovna, devoted herself and her fortune so entirely to founding these schools that a special department of the State had to be created to look after their administration. About 1855 another empress, Maria Alexandrovna extended the work by founding schools for girls of the middle

The "Gym-  
nasiums".

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<sup>1)</sup>Voltaire. Corres. Letter to Cath. II. 12 mars 1772. (Oeuvres complètes. Garnier. 1885. vol. 48.)

<sup>2)</sup>For the history cp. A. Rambaud. "L'Education des Filles en Russie et Les Gymnases de Femmes". (Revue des Deux Mondes avril 1873.)

<sup>3)</sup>quoted by Tournieux. Diderot et Catherine II. "Sur l'éducation des cadets."

classes, for the Institutes had become a wholly aristocratic foundation. The inspiration of the new schools was German, not French, and the name given to them - "Gymnasium" - German also. They were well organized and gave an excellent education, in some ways better than that given at the Institutes. For example, their curriculum was wider, and the pupils were neither drawn exclusively from one social class, nor separated jealously from their families. But they do not belong to the Saint-Cyr tradition and so do not claim our attention here.<sup>1)</sup> The Institutes went on increasing in number and before long there were seven in Saint-Petersburg, four in Moscow and fifteen in other parts of the country. They were, of course, swept away in the Revolution, but an account given of them in 1909<sup>2)</sup> shows that they kept something of their Saint-Cyr character to the end

Description  
of the  
Institutes -  
a) buildings.

The Institutes were usually housed<sup>3)</sup> in some magnificent building, such as the palace of a grand duke. Many of them were arranged on a uniform plan, with the superior's rooms and the classrooms on the ground floor, and the refectory, reception rooms and dormitories upstairs. They were well equipped and had plenty of ground round about them. This last was a necessary feature, as the girls never went beyond

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<sup>1)</sup>Ramnaud op. cit. II-IV gives an account of the Gymnasiums.

<sup>2)</sup>Lirondelle. "Chez les Collégiennes Russes".

<sup>3)</sup>Hippeau. L'Instruction Publique en Russie, 1878.

them and there were no holidays.

b) staff

The administration was eventually in the hands of a special State department, but in the original plans drawn up for the Empress by her advisor Betzky,<sup>1)</sup> it was to be left to a Council composed of the superior and four men of rank from outside. All questions of finance and of the admission of the girls were to be left to the Council. The same plans tell what were to be the duties of the various people in authority in the Institute. The chief power lay with the Superior. She was appointed by the Empress herself and, in her turn, she appointed and dismissed the mistresses, inspected the classes and exercised a general supervision. Next to her came the Directress, who had more to do with the material side of the girls' welfare, but who also supervised the classes and generally assisted the Superior. The mistresses were of two kinds - "inspectors", who were often old girls of the school and who were responsible for discipline in the classroom; and "teachers", who were entrusted merely with instructing the girls. There were eight of the former and forty of the latter in the first Institute founded by Catherine. Candidates for admission<sup>2)</sup> to the Institutes had to give

c) girls

i) admission

<sup>1)</sup> Les Plans et les Statuts des Différents Etablissements Ordonnés par S.M.I. Catherine II. Betzky, traduits J.N. Clerc. Amsterdam 1775. Pt. 4 (b) "Communauté des Demoiselles ...

<sup>2)</sup> Betzky. op. cit. Communauté des Demoiselles. I. 2.

ii) fees

satisfactory proof of being of noble birth but poor. Once admitted, they paid no fees and they were entirely separated from their homes till the age of eighteen, when they were sent back into the world with a dowry of two thousand roubles.<sup>1)</sup>

iii) age

iv) numbers

v) classes

vi) uniform

Betzky's plans speak of the girls as being two hundred in number and varying in age from six to eighteen. Catherine writes that there were five hundred girls in the Convent of the Resurrection,<sup>2)</sup> but no doubt the numbers varied in the different Institutes. The two hundred could be divided up very conveniently into four classes which were again subdivided and each class, as at Saint-Cyr, was distinguished by a different colour, brown, blue, grey or white.<sup>3)</sup> For the girls wore a uniform consisting of a low-necked, short-sleeved dress. They had also a white wimple covering the shoulders, white sleeves and a white apron, but these were only worn on special occasions.<sup>4)</sup>

Aim.

The aim of the education given at the Institutes was to train girls for home life. "Nous sommes tres éloignés d'en vouloir faire des religieuses," Catherine wrote to Voltaire.<sup>5)</sup>

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1) Rambaud. op. cit.

2) Letter to Voltaire. 10 Feb. 1772. (Voltaire. Oeuvres. Garnier. vol. 48.)

3) Betzky. op. cit. II.

4) Hippeau. op. cit.

5) Letter to Voltaire. 23 March - 3 April 1772. (Voltaire. Oeuvres. Vol. 48.)



Curriculum.

"Nous les élevons, au contraire, pour les rendre les délices des familles où elles entreront: nous ne les voulons ni prudes ni coquettes mais aimables, et en état d'élever leurs propres enfants et d'avoir soin de leur maison". Yet the curriculum<sup>1)</sup> which they followed was by no means restricted to domestic subjects. Religious education and practical training in all arts useful in the home certainly occupied an important place in it, but besides these the girls were taught all the ordinary school subjects - literature, languages, history, geography, arithmetic, drawing, music, as well as heraldry, architecture and some anatomy. The Institutes had always a great reputation for the teaching of languages, though science was somewhat neglected.

Time-table.

The girls' time was planned out for them from morning till evening, as it must be in a large community. It seems to have been wisely planned: we hear of recreations<sup>2)</sup> of which "liberty is to be the soul", and it is specially recommended that plenty of time should be allowed for meals and sleep. Moreover, the monotony of an unending term was broken, as at Saint-Cyr, both by visitors and by theatricals. Visitors were allowed to come on certain days and watch the girls dancing, but they were kept at a safe distance behind a balustrade,<sup>3)</sup>

Monotony  
broken by  
1) visits

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1) Betzky. o. cit. II<sub>1</sub>.

2) Ibid. II<sub>6</sub>, 7.

3) Cath. II to Voltaire. 23 March - 3 April 1772.  
(Voltaire. Oeuvres. Vol. 48.)

ii) theatricals

and no mention is made of any opportunity for parents to see their children in private. As for theatricals, much of Catherine's correspondence with Voltaire is about suitable plays for her girls, and they acted two or three of his tragedies.<sup>1)</sup> But, like *Andromaque*, *Zaïre* and *Sémiramis* were not suitable for schools and when Diderot arrived and saw them he undertook to write what the Empress was seeking - "Ce que Voltaire n'a pas fait et ce qu'il eût mieux fait que .. moi, moi, Madame, je le ferai".<sup>2)</sup> The plays, however, were never written and to Catherine belongs none of the glory of having called forth an "*Esther*" or an "*Athalie*".

Conclusion.  
There are  
indications  
of other  
imitations  
of St. Cyr  
abroad.

Such were some of the characteristic features of the schools founded by Catherine the Great. Russia was not the only country to imitate Saint-Cyr: we are told<sup>3)</sup> that Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Poland all made the attempt, but little is said about the schools they set up. Yet the very fact that such an attempt was made shows how widely Madame de Maintenon's foundation influenced the education of girls, and the imitations of Saint-Cyr outside France would be an interesting subject for research.

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1) Cath. II to Voltaire. 23 March - 3 April 1772.  
(Voltaire. Oeuvres. Vol. 48).

2) Tourneux, op. cit. XII.

3) Lavallée, ch. 15, p. 319. Taphanel. Le Théâtre de St Cyr. Ch. 15.

## 9. Theorists.

Perhaps it is because writers on educational theory - as distinct from educational history - are more interested in what they have to say themselves, than in what has been done by others before them, that so few of them even mention Madame de Maintenon and Saint-Cyr. The best known educational theorists, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, never refer to her at all and there are only two writers whom she can be said to have influenced in any degree. It is questionable too whether she would have recognized her own ideas in the strangeness of their new setting.

### A) Abbé de Saint-Pierre

The first of these writers was Charles Irénée Castel de Saint-Pierre, commonly known as the Abbé de Saint Pierre. He was only some twenty years younger than Madame de Maintenon,<sup>1)</sup> and thus would know Saint-Cyr in its early glorious days. He was no practical teacher, nor was he really more interested in education than in, for example, economics. But he had a passion for making schemes for reforming or perfecting all existing institutions, including schools and colleges.

### His life.

His whole life was given up to planning these reforms. He was the son of a well-to-do country gentleman, from whom he inherited a certain sum of money, which enabled him to

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<sup>1)</sup> He was born in 1658 and died in 1743.

settle down in Paris in 1686. He had once thought of being a monk, but he was not fitted either by health or temperament for such a life, so he had taken orders, though his chief interest was in science. At Paris, he "ran after famous men" - as he tells us himself - and made the acquaintance of Fontenelle and Madame de Lambert. He became a member of the Academy and was appointed private chaplain to Madame - a post which was no more than a sinecure. Meanwhile, he wrote his projects and started a club, where he discussed his ideas with a number of his friends. Even after the club was closed by the orders of the Abbe Fleury in 1731, he continued to draw up schemes of reform until the day of his death.<sup>1)</sup>

His writings.

He wrote about thirty volumes in all, on all sorts of subjects such as politics, economics, morality and theology.

Educational works.

In his zeal for reform it is no wonder that he wished to perfect education amongst everything else and he wrote four treatises in particular on it:- "Un projet pour perfectionner l'éducation": "Un Projet pour perfectionner l'éducation domestique des princes et des grands seigneurs": "Un projet pour perfectionner l'éducation des filles", and "Observations sur le dessin d'établir un Bureau perpétuel pour l'éducation publique dans les Collèges".<sup>2)</sup> The last-named would be sufficient in

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<sup>1)</sup>For his life cp. E. Gourny. Etude sur la Vie et les Ecrits de l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre. Paris 1859.

<sup>2)</sup>These are all contained in two volumes (Bib. Nat. Inventaire E. 5220-5221) called "Oeuvres Diverses". Paris 1730

itself to win him some measure of fame as a pioneer, for the scheme which he outlines in it, of a central office controlling all public educational bodies, contains in germ the idea of the Ministry of Public Instruction as established in France to-day.

Ideas on  
education in  
general.

According to the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, the aim of education is to increase the happiness both of the individual and of the state.<sup>1)</sup> Happiness is dependent on goodness: the most important side of education is, therefore, the formation of character. The discipline of living with other people is of the greatest value in this training of character. Hence the Abbé is a supporter of public education in a "College" rather than of private teaching at home. "Au collège," he writes, "les pareils s'entrecorrigent et s'entrepolissent journellement et nécessairement les uns les autres dans leur commerce, à peu près comme les cailloux raboteux se polissent et s'arrondissent dans la mer par leur frottement journalier."<sup>2)</sup> He would have "something of all the arts and of all the sciences"<sup>3)</sup> taught at school, and he plans a gigantic curriculum where practically nothing is omitted, but where all sense of proportion is lacking and great and small are jumbled together in confusion.

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1) *Projet pour perfectionner l'éduc<sup>n</sup> des filles. Intro<sup>n</sup>*

2) *Projet pour perfectionner l'éduc<sup>n</sup>*

3) *Quoted by Compayré. Hist. Critique des Doctrines de l'Education en France depuis le 16<sup>e</sup> siècle. Paris 1879. Vol. II, p. 19..*

Ideas on  
education of  
girls.

Even if his "Project for Perfecting the Education of Girls" were worthless, the Abbé would deserve some credit for having considered the education of women at all, at a time when so little attention was paid to it. As a matter of fact, much of what he has to say is valuable and it is all interesting to us here, because it is Saint-Cyr which he takes as the model which he would have imitated by all schools for girls in France.

Aim.

The aim which he proposes for girls' education, as for education in general, is happiness. By this he does not mean so much the happiness of the girls themselves, as that of the husbands and neighbours and home that they will one day possess. He realises how great a responsibility is laid upon them in the bringing up of children and the care of servants and dependents and how wide-spread is their influence. He sees, therefore, the importance of their education and he would spend no less care upon it than upon that of boys.<sup>1)</sup>

Takes St. Cyr  
as his model.

His "plan" was to perfect the "famous college of Saint-Cyr",<sup>2)</sup> and gradually to increase its size. It was to be a college where, in two or three years' time, enough nuns to start two or three similar institutions would be trained to

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1) Projet pour perfectionner l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. des filles. 1<sup>r</sup> discours.  
2) " " " l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. ch. 14.

teach.<sup>1)</sup> Thus it would become the centre of a large teaching order and the State would not only recognise it, but would compel every convent school to have a certain proportion of Saint-Cyriennes among its mistresses. For the Abbe did not want to abolish all convent schools. On the contrary, he regarded them, as in fact they were, as the only colleges existing for girls.<sup>2)</sup> But he wanted to raise their standard and to submit them, with all other educational institutions, to inspection by the "Bureau Perpétuel".

Details of  
his scheme.

The influence of Saint-Cyr is apparent, moreover, in the details of the scheme. The abbé calculates that the school-life of a girl should last thirteen years, from the age of five to that of eighteen. He would therefore have thirteen classes in a school, each consisting of fifteen pupils, with three mistresses in charge.<sup>3)</sup> All the girls were to wear a uniform, with little variations to distinguish one class from another: "On m'a dit," he writes, "que l'on avait sagement observé à Saint-Cyr cette uniformité et cette diversité".<sup>4)</sup>

Moral  
Education.

For girls, as for boys, the most important side of education was the formation of character and the greater part

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1) *Projet pour perfectionner l'éduc<sup>n</sup> des filles. 3<sup>e</sup> discours.*

2) *Ibid. Introd<sup>n</sup>.*

3) *Ibid. 3<sup>e</sup> discours. §§ 8-10.*

4) *Ibid. § 13.*

of the "Project for Perfecting Girls' Education" consists of a discussion of the virtues which must be inculcated and the best means of inculcating them.<sup>1)</sup> The moral qualities which are emphasised in particular are prudence, justice, charity and patience. Various ways of training girls in them are suggested. These include "good conduct" prizes awarded by vote<sup>2)</sup> and a form of self-government by which the girls should themselves judge and pass sentence upon offenders.<sup>3)</sup> The Abbe also recommends the learning and acting of "Conversations" or "Scenes de Politesse" to teach manners and behaviour in society. He does not mention the "Conversations" of Madame de Maintenon by name, but it is clear that they are what he had in mind.<sup>4)</sup> He would also have the girls act scenes from plays which would provide them with examples of heroism or nobility of character, and the plays which he singles out are "Esther" and "Athalie".<sup>5)</sup>

Instruction. Training of character thus came first in the Abbé's

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1) See especially 2<sup>e</sup> discours.

2) Projet pour perfectionner l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. des filles. 3<sup>e</sup> discours. § 5.

3) Ibid. § 4.

4) Ibid. 3<sup>e</sup> discours. § 17.

5) Ibid. § 3.



scheme, but intellectual education also played an important part there. The reasons he gives for its prominence are interesting. In the first place he says that all men should learn all that they possibly can "afin de plaire davantage à Dieu en tâchant d'imiter davantage selon notre pouvoir sa bienfaisance et ses connaissances infinies".<sup>1)</sup> Secondly, women in particular must be instructed "afin qu'elles puissent entendre avec plaisir ce que leur diront les hommes, leur faire des questions à propos, et entretenir plus facilement conversation avec leurs maris des événements journaliers de leurs emplois".<sup>2)</sup> He would therefore have girls taught a little of everything - history, geography, the laws of their country, jurisprudence, astronomy, arithmetic, natural science, including "some acquaintance with the working of the bodies of animals." He recommends that they should learn to enjoy reading and music, so that they could make a good use of leisure. Finally, he would train them to be skilled in sewing and all branches of household management<sup>3)</sup> and he suggests that, in order to gain some practical experience in these, the girls should be "apprenticed" for a certain length of time to the nuns in charge of the various departments of the house. It will be remembered that this was a practice actually existing at Saint-Cyr.

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1) *Projet pour perfectionner l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. des filles. 2<sup>e</sup> discours.*

2) *Quoted Gourny. Ch. 8.*

3) *Projet pour perfectionner l'éduc<sup>n</sup>. des filles. 3<sup>e</sup> discours.*

Plans never  
carried out,  
and almost  
forgotten.

It is easy to point out the weaknesses of the schemes of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre but it is only fair to him to add that, had girls' education been organised on the lines which he laid down, he would probably have been the first to suggest improvements. But his Projects were destined never to be carried out. They have sunk even further into oblivion than such schemes usually do, perhaps because, whatever we may think of the Abbé's ability as a constructive thinker, there is no doubt that he wrote very badly. Thus many who are really interested in Madame de Maintenon and her foundation hardly realise that here was a man who held up Saint-Cyr as a pattern of what a girls's school ought to be.

\* \* \*

B. M.<sup>me</sup> de  
Genlis.

The Abbé de Saint-Pierre was not the only educational theorist whose writings show that he had made a study of Madame de Maintenon and found much to approve in Saint-Cyr. Half a century after his death, another writer, as unlike the Abbé as she was unlike Madame de Maintenon, was publishing books and making schemes for improving education. One of these at least she based entirely upon Saint-Cyr. This writer was Stéphanie Félicité Ducrest, marchioness of Genlis.<sup>1)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> 1746-1830.

Her inclusion  
in the St. Cyr  
tradition  
surprising,  
because of  
a) her  
personality  
and career.

At first, the idea that Madame de Genlis has any place in the Saint-Cyr tradition seems absurd. We think of her extraordinary personality and career:<sup>1)</sup> of her own desultory education: of her appointment as governess to Mademoiselle d'Orléans, daughter of the Duke of Chartres and of her successful scheming to be made "tutor" to his sons as well. We remember her quarrels with the duchess, which led Madame de Genlis being asked to resign her post, which she did, only to be reinstalled a little later. We cannot forget how enthusiastic a supporter of Napoleon she became, when he was made First Consul, nor how, at the return of the Bourbons, she was ready to offer her services to them, and to go back to the side of the Duke of Orléans when she was rebuffed by Louis XVIII. Madame de Maintenon's was an amazing career, but there was a stability, a "solidité", to use the king's own expression, about her, for which one looks in vain from Madame de Genlis. In the same way, the work for which she is best known - the education of Louis Philippe, and her books "Adèle et Théodore" and the "Leçons d'une Gouvernante" - is far removed from Saint-Cyr influence, but proclaims rather her kinship with Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

b) her best  
known works -  
which are  
influenced  
by Rousseau.

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<sup>2)</sup> For her life cp., besides her "Mémoires", J. Harmand. Mme. de Genlis. Sa vie intime et politique. Bonhomme. Vie de Mme. de Genlis.

Nevertheless,  
she is like  
M<sup>re</sup> de  
Maintenon  
in

a) love of  
teaching.

b) doctrine of  
making learn-  
ing pleasant.

Yet, even on the surface, Madame de Genlis had something in common with Madame de Maintenon. This was her love of teaching. Sainte-Beuve speaks of it as the one aspect of her character which gives unity to her career,<sup>1)</sup> and certainly it seems to have been born in her and to have remained with her all her life. She tells in her "Memoirs" of how she taught the peasant children on her father's estate when she was only a child herself, and she could never resist the temptation to teach.<sup>2)</sup> This was one way in which she resembled Madame de Maintenon. Again, in all her educational writings, she lays great stress upon the idea of making learning pleasant, or learning by playing. For example, she would have Adèle and Théodore learn, all unsuspecting, from historical games or a magic lantern, or from playing at houses or acting charades.<sup>3)</sup> No doubt there was a great deal of Rousseau in this too, but it must not be forgotten that the idea occupies a prominent place in Madame de Maintenon's educational theory as well.<sup>4)</sup>

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1) Causeries du Lundi. 14 oct. 1850. "Madame de Genlis."

2) Mémoires I. p. 27 (ed. Colburn 1825). "J'avais le goût d'enseigner aux enfants, et je m'étais fait maîtresse d'école d'une singulière manière... Des petits garçons du village venaient là (i.e. sous les fenêtres du château) pour jouer ... je m'imaginais de leur donner des leçons, c'est à dire, de leur enseigner ce que je savais, le catéchisme et quelques vers des tragédies de Mademoiselle Barbier et ce qu'on m'avait appris par coeur des principes de musique. Mes petits disciples m'écoutaient avec la plus grande attention."

3) Adèle et Théodore. cp. especially I. ch. 9, 11, 29.

4) It seems to me possible that Mme. de Genlis was consciously imitating Mme. de Maintenon in this respect. She refers to her as, one who believed in making things easier for the pupil.

More resemblance not sufficient: there is a definite connection - but only in Mme de Genlis' theoretical work.

Madame de Genlis' love of teaching, however, and the emphasis she lays upon making learning pleasant are, at most, mere resemblances to Madame de Maintenon. A more definite connection with Saint-Cyr must be established to justify her inclusion in the tradition at all. This connection can be proved, but not from any of Madame de Genlis' practical work as a teacher. It is for this reason that she has been included here as a "theorist" - not because her work as a practical teacher has been overlooked, but because the educational scheme which she bases on Saint-Cyr never left the realm of theory for that of fact.

Interest in Mme de Maintenon shown in her non-educational writings:-

1) "Madame de Maintenon".

The non-educational writings of Madame de Genlis show that she had studied Madame de Maintenon and knew her well. She devoted a whole book to her, of the sort that is usually called a historical novel, but there is more romance than history about it.<sup>1)</sup> In it she allows herself to take many liberties with her subject. For instance, she attributes to her heroine sentiments hard to conciliate with the Francoise d'Aubigné of history.<sup>2)</sup> Again, she leaves out important episodes and people and makes much of others which have little value and still less historical basis.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) "Madame de Maintenon." Publ. 1806.

2) cp. § 13 - where she quotes Mme. de Maintenon as delighting in making herself remarkable.

3) No mention is made of her education by the Ursulines nor of the Abbe Gobelin: much is said of Madame de Saint-Esile.

Further, her order of events is not by any means reliable.<sup>1)</sup> Nevertheless, the book shows two things. It illustrates Madame de Genlis' admiration for Madame de Maintenon - "je l'ai toujours trouvée parfaite," she writes<sup>2)</sup> - and it shows that Madame de Genlis realised the importance in which Madame de Maintenon held Saint-Cyr.

11) "Mémoires".

Again, from her Memoirs, it is evident that Madame de Genlis knew and appreciated the Letters of Madame de Maintenon. "Je relus dans ce temps les Lettres de Madame de Sévigné, celles de Madame de Maintenon, les souvenirs de Madame de Caylus, les Mémoires du Cardinal de Retz. C'est une lecture dont on ne se lasse point," she writes on one occasion,<sup>3)</sup> and at other times she refers to the advice Madame de Maintenon gave to her niece, Madame de Caylus, and to her sister-in-law, and to the "Conversations" she had written for Saint-Cyr.<sup>4)</sup>

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1) e.g. she places the foundation of St. Cyr before the marriage.

2) "M<sup>e</sup> de Maintenon." Preface.

3) Mémoires II, p. 103. cp. VI. p. 281.

4) Ibid. III. p. 81, VI p. 15.

Real connection  
is in 2  
treatises -  
"suppression  
des couvents"  
and "Ecole  
Rurale".

Her acquaintance with the writings of Madame de Maintenon is thus established beyond a doubt, but it is impossible not to feel astonished on finding how wholeheartedly she approves of Saint-Cyr and holds it up as a pattern to be copied by other schools. Yet this is what she does in two treatises. The first was published in 1791 and was called a "Discours sur la Suppression des Couvents de Religieuses et sur l'Education Publique des Femmes". The other appeared ten years later under the title of "Un Projet d'une Ecole Rurale pour l'Education des Filles."

"Suppression  
des Couvents" -

The "Discours sur la Suppression des Couvents" was provoked by the decree of February 19th, 1790, ordering all convents to be closed. Madame de Genlis does not contend that convent schools were perfect, or even that they were as good as they could have been. But she acknowledges their value and does not want to see them swept away. She would rather have them reformed as "écoles cloîtrées" - a change which would mean that those who taught might go in and out as they pleased, but no man would be admitted beyond the "parloir", and the pupils could not go outside the school grounds.

i) advises  
reform of  
convent  
schools as  
"écoles  
cloîtrées".

ii) advises  
adoption of  
the St Cyr  
plan of  
education.

Thus, the mistresses would be free and bound by no vows. Instead, Madame de Genlis would make them all promise to follow "with the most scrupulous exactitude" a plan of

education, which she proceeds to explain. It is borrowed straight from Madame de Maintenon, and Madame de Genlis has no hesitation about acknowledging her debt. She writes: "A l'égard de ce plan, il est fait en grande partie, et par la plus célèbre de toutes les institutrices (l'auguste fondatrice de Saint-Cyr). Je sais qu'en général on a beaucoup de prévention contre l'éducation de Saint-Cyr. J'ai été dans ce monastère, j'ai vu toutes les classes et suivi tous les exercices avec le plus grand intérêt, et je crois qu'il n'existe dans aucun pays une institution de ce genre, mieux combinée et plus parfaite."

iii) the  
curriculum.

According to this plan, the aim of girls' education, as conceived both by Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Genlis, was to produce good wives and mothers and its chief care was to inculcate virtue, especially the "peaceful, domestic virtues". Madame de Genlis points out how, at Saint-Cyr, the girls were trained in every conceivable kind of art which would be useful in the home, from the care of children (for the elder helped to look after the younger) to the drawing of plants so as to be able to make their own designs for embroidery. So far she entirely approves of the Saint-Cyr scheme, as she understood it, or as it was in her day. To it, she would add some instruction in law and a good deal



of physical education. This is the plan which she would make her teachers promise to follow faithfully, for, as she says, "Il me semble que le meilleur plan d'études pour les écoles publiques est celui de Saint-Cyr, en y ajoutant quelques études de plus."

"Ecole Rurale" -  
advises that  
education

i) should fit  
social  
position.

ii) be modelled  
on St Cyr.

iii) have a wide  
curriculum.

Ten years later she still held the same views. In the "Projet d'une Ecole Rurale" Madame de Genlis traces a plan of education suitable for girls from ordinary, middle-class homes, for, with Madame de Maintenon, she believed in educating people for their sphere in life. Her model is again Saint-Cyr. Her idea is that the school should be built in the country, with plenty of ground about it, where there would be a model farm and all its dependencies. The girls, who were to be divided into classes, as at Saint-Cyr, were to be given, in the first place, religious education, and, secondly, practical training including all sorts of house-work and outdoor work. On the intellectual side, they were to be taught reading, writing and arithmetic, foreign languages (though they were only to read prose, not poetry), history, geography, botany and the elements of law. The programme of studies which Madame de Genlis sketches is so vast that it is no wonder that she devotes so much time to defending it and proving its practicability.

These tracts  
justify <sup>Mme</sup>  
de Genlis'  
inclusion in  
the St. Cyr  
tradition.

Traces of the influence of Saint-Cyr are also to be found in Madame de Genlis' "Discours sur l'Education Publique du Peuple." There, however, Madame de Maintenon is not mentioned by name, and it is the less necessary to discuss it in detail as the other two works prove Madame de Genlis' right to a place in the Saint-Cyr tradition. It is indeed hard to see how such a place could be denied to one who writes, as Madame de Genlis does in the "Projet d'une Ecole Rurale"; - "L'illustre et vertueuse fondatrice de Saint-Cyr a tracé dans ce genre le meilleur plan d'éducation qu'on ait imaginé jusqu'ici, et ce plan est tel qu'on peut, à la vérité, y ajouter, mais qu'il est impossible d'en rien retrancher".

\* \* \*

#### 10. Conclusion.

We have come now to the end of our review. We have considered Madame de Maintenon and her foundation, and seen what was the special contribution that she had to make towards the advancement of girls' education. We have marked the way in which the ideas, which were first put into practice at Saint-Cyr, reappeared in other schools, and we have studied a few of the different kinds of institutions, which were either actually formed on the model of Saint-Cyr or planned to be so formed. But the question which was asked at the outset is still unanswered. Does anything remain

to-day of all this work? The answer depends on the meaning of the question. A search for tangible traces of Saint-Cyr, for schools that still exist, and buildings of bricks and mortar is doomed to failure. The Legion of Honour Schools certainly continue to flourish, but even they are changing with the times, and they are the last to remain. Outside of them, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find even one school which traces its descent from Saint-Cyr, or consciously imitates its methods.

On the other hand, Madame de Maintenon's work was not perpetuated only in bricks and mortar. She left a more lasting memorial in all her writings on education, and especially in her letters. We have already seen how great a regard the Ursulines had for these. One quotation from a letter written less than a year ago will show that they are not alone in their admiration. This letter runs: "Ces règlements ont fait l'admiration des religieuses de \_\_\_\_\_ de notre ville, qui, avant les lois contre l'enseignement, avaient un florissant pensionnat. Elles trouvèrent cette manière d'élever la jeunesse parfaite - cela au vingtième siècle." "Perfect" is, no doubt, too strong a word: the externals of education change, and methods must be adapted to meet new circumstances. But anyone who has studied the Letters of Madame de Maintenon knows that all that is said

there about the underlying principles is as true for the present age as for the seventeenth century. In so far, then, as the educational tradition, inherited from Madame de Maintenon, consists of just these principles, it has not died, and it is not likely to die.